

The Macro-Politics of the Afghan Crisis:

A U.S. Perspective

By

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of the University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December, 1999

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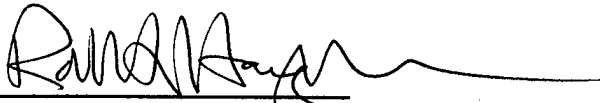
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Robert L. Hardgrave

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gail Minault", written over a horizontal line.

Gail Minault

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INTRODUCTION

For Western nations to presume that they can safely exploit the vast oil and gas riches of Central Asia without first helping bring peace to Afghanistan is unrealistic to the extreme. A new Great Game is being played in the region. At stake, however, are no longer questions of mere political influence or who gets to build oil and gas pipelines where. These issues will be irrelevant unless the West figures out how to stop the spreading conflagration in Afghanistan--and fast¹

As we enter the 21st century, peace and stability in Afghanistan remain distant and seemingly unattainable. Unfortunately, this troubled land has also become the geopolitical lynchpin on which stability and development throughout South and Central Asia hinges. As a result, Afghanistan's neighbors, in an effort to advance their own regional agendas, directly influence internal Afghani politics. While the geopolitical significance of Afghanistan has evolved over the years, foreign involvement in its internal politics, military, and religious beliefs has remained constant since the late 19th century. Today's crisis in Afghanistan is a direct result of this prolonged external involvement.

The sudden emergence of the Taliban² as the dominant military and political force in Afghanistan has increased international security concerns. Through the implementation of its ultra conservative brand of fundamental Islam, the Taliban has drawn criticism not only from the west, but the

¹ Ahmed Rashid, "Rewriting the rules of the Great Game. Talibanization?" *Foreign Affairs* 78 (November-December 1999): 23.

² In this study Taliban refers to the political entity, not the Arabic "Seeker of knowledge".

international Muslim community as well. By offering protection to suspected terrorist Usama bin Laden, Afghanistan has become directly linked to terrorism. Finally, under the Taliban, Afghanistan has become a major world drug supplier, dealing primarily in heroin and opium.

Over the past several years, a tremendous amount of international effort has been focused on finding a peaceful resolution to the "Afghan crisis." Unfortunately, little progress has been made. The most recent attempt, in July 1999, again failed to generate an agreement, as the Taliban refused to accept the terms being discussed.³ To date, peace talks, while recognizing the role of foreign involvement in the creation and propagation of the crisis, have failed to embrace political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau's basic principle, "diplomacy must look at the political scene from the point of view of the other nation[s]."⁴ Continued discussions that fail to address the concerns of Afghanistan's neighbors may advance the Afghan conflict and delay peace and development of the region as a whole.

The United States is guilty of short sightedness as well. Addressing the United States' narrow focus in Afghanistan, a European diplomat states, "until the U.S. has a coherent Afghan policy rather than just a get bin Laden

³ Timofei Zhukov, "Afghan Peace Talks End," *Associated Press*, 20 July 1999 [news service on-line]; available from <http://www.infobeat.com/stories/cgi/story.cgi?id=2560371297-880.html>; Internet; accessed on 22 July 1999.

⁴ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th Edition, Revised (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1978), 553.

policy, the war will continue.”⁵ The United States has also been criticized for not working to limit external involvement in the crisis. According to Berhanuddin Rabbani, a leader within Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance, “the Americans hold the key to stop[ing] the external interference in Afghanistan, but they don’t seem to have the will or determination to do so.”⁶

The concern over the United States’ motivation is a question of priorities and is best left for policy makers to decide. However, to broaden the U.S. perspective and develop a coherent Afghan policy, three principles must be included in future discussions on Afghanistan. First, without an organic dispute to nurture, it would be virtually impossible for any external interest to propagate future unrest in Afghanistan. Second, without the support of external interests being provided to the parties involved in the dispute, future conflicts cannot be sustained. Third, considering the depth of external involvement in the Afghan conflict, we must analyze the conflict from the viewpoint of its external participants. For this reason, the Afghan conflict must be analyzed from the inside out to best understand the issues at the heart of the dispute. On the other hand, any proposed resolution must be developed from the outside in, ensuring the concerns of the countries providing resources to the combatant parties are addressed.

⁵ Quoted in Ahmed Rashid, “Wages of War,” *Far Eastern Economic Review* (5 August 1999): 12.

⁶ Ibid.

METHODOLOGY

This study incorporates a multi-dimensional method of analysis and policy formulation that addresses the Afghan crisis on multiple levels. The Chinese Box is a perfect metaphor for this approach, as each level of a multi-layered Chinese Box is removed, the new, smaller box and its contents remain a mystery. Until you have opened the smallest of the boxes, it is impossible to know the contents of the greater whole. Yet, without first opening the largest box, the smaller boxes cannot be opened at all.

When the approach is applied to conflict resolution and policy analysis, the "ground zero" conflict between various fighting factions occupies the position of the smallest box. Those neighboring, or "one level removed", countries with an ideological or vested interest in the resolution of the crisis are the second box. A "second level removed," the next box, is represented by countries within the region that have an inherent interest in guiding the resolution of the conflict, as it impacts their own regional power base. The number of boxes may vary, but the outer box is always represented by relevant, interested elements of the international community.

Once all levels of the box have been analyzed and understood, only then is it possible to begin the process of developing an appropriate

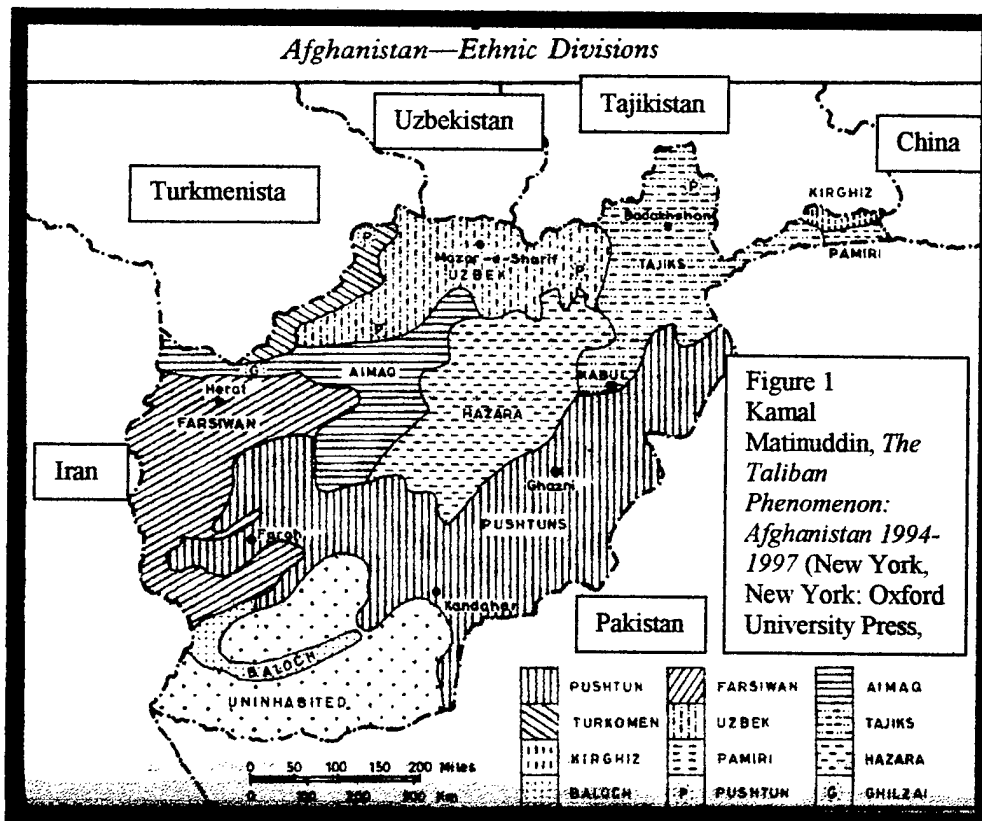
response that adequately addresses the concerns uncovered as the boxes were unwrapped. In developing this response, rebuilding the box, each level is simultaneously addressed, separately and as part of the greater whole.

The policy development process can be difficult and requires diplomacy on the level of a master craftsman building the proverbial ship in a bottle. The craftsman builds the ship, all the while dealing with the challenge of an invisible, impenetrable barrier represented by the glass bottle. While his craftsmanship is measured by the quality of the ship he builds, he must preserve the integrity of the glass bottle to be successful. Likewise, the United States must ensure that future policies addressing Afghanistan simultaneously address the macro-politics of the crisis, represented by the glass bottle, and the ground zero conflict the ship represents.

GROUND ZERO CONFLICT

BACKGROUND

Afghanistan shares borders with Iran to the west, the Central Asian republics and China to the north, and Pakistan to the southeast. Strong cultural, tribal and ethnic ties with its neighbors, shape Afghanistan demographically. Uzbeks and Turkomen are concentrated in northern Afghanistan; Tajiks in the northeast; Hazaras in the central mountains; and Pushtuns in the southeast. Excluding the Hazaras, each ethnic group shares a border and maintains strong ethnic ties with one of Afghanistan's neighbors. (See Figure 1.)



Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group as they account for an estimated 38 percent of the population, with Tajiks being the second largest and accounting for approximately 25 percent. Hazaras are the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, accounting for an estimated 19 percent of the population. The last significant ethnic group is the Uzbeks, as they account for 6 percent of the population. A combination of several smaller ethnic groups accounts for the remaining 12 percent of the population. The country is virtually one hundred percent Muslim -- 84 percent Sunni, 15 percent Shia.⁷ The Hazaras are predominantly Shia and account for the majority of the Afghanistan's Shia population. Therefore, religion acts as a link between the Hazaras and Iran similar to the ethnic links previously described.

The political situation in Afghanistan prior to the late 19th century consisted of loose confederations that afforded varying levels of autonomy to all tribes and ethnic groups. Unfortunately, Afghanistan was not immune to the effects of colonialism and the impact of European expansion, as Afghanistan was forced into modern statehood during the period of 1878 to 1880.⁸ The establishment of Afghanistan's modern border soon followed in

⁷ "Afghanistan," *The Political Reference Almanac*, March 1999 [information service on-line]; available from <http://www.polisci.com/world/nation/AF.html>; Internet; accessed on 15 August 1999.

⁸ Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search for Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State* (New Haven, New York: Yale University Press, 1995), 18.

1907 through a treaty between Russia and Great Britain to contain their regional ambitions. Throughout the 20th century, several Afghani leaders made unsuccessful attempts to consolidate Afghanistan into a unified nation state. Two patterns emerged: Pashtuns controlled the central government and extensive tribal autonomy was offered to the various ethnic groups. As a result, there was limited ethno-religious friction and the conflict seen today did not exist.

SOVIET OCCUPATION

In the 1970s, conflicts between Soviet backed communist elements and anti-Communist elements backed by the United States and Iran brought Afghanistan into the Cold War. Communist elements eventually took control of the government through a military coup on 27 April 1978, and placed the Soviet backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in power.⁹ The PDPA's attempts at social reform initiated a countrywide rebellion, as they "would have destroyed the social basis of class power in the Afghan countryside."¹⁰ In other words, Afghanistan's various factions rebelled against the PDPA's threat to their autonomy, not against Communism or religious oppression.

The primary concern of the Soviet Union, as with earlier Russian

⁹ Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi, eds., *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*, (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 187.

¹⁰ Ibid.

predecessors, was maintaining Afghanistan as a buffer state against western threats to Central Asia. This required a stable and friendly government in Afghanistan, reliant on the Soviet Union for support. Faced with a popular revolt against the communist supported regime, the Soviets apparently feared the potential of western influence expanding in Afghanistan.¹¹ This is certainly demonstrated by the comments of Valentin Falin, Deputy Director of the Central Committee's International Department, as he discussed the decision to intervene:

What we feared, was that he [Amin, head of the Afghan revolutionary government] would do a Sadat [Egyptian President]. I can't remember exactly when, we had information that Amin was planning to do what Sadat had done. He was looking for a way to justify a break with us.¹²

The Soviet Union intervened in December of 1979, in response to this perceived western threat, to install a communist regime in Afghanistan that could bring stability and not generate more unrest through additional reforms. They understood that the Afghan resistance movement was not rebelling against communism, but the reforms being forced on it by Amin's communist regime. Unfortunately, the damage was done and the Soviet Union came to represent change, and a loss of autonomy.

While the resistance factions were united in their opposition to the

¹¹ Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 44.

¹² Ibid.

Soviet Union, they remained "divided by the same ethnic and tribal divisions that have impeded the emergence of a coherent Afghan nationalism since the seventeenth century."¹³ Each group's reliance on its respective regional backer was further strengthened, as regional countries used this support to further their respective agenda through involvement in Afghanistan's internal politics. Religion emerged as an additional divisive factor in Afghan society during the war, as "Islamic fundamentalism introduced a new and even more debilitating element of internecine strife."¹⁴ This further polarized the various fighting factions and efforts to present a coordinated defensive front were greatly hindered. As a result, regional commanders conducted the fighting on local levels.

This created infighting between those believing in varying degrees of Islamic fundamentalism and developed into ideological differences between the various Sunni factions. Just as important was the emergence of increased animosity between Sunni fundamentalists and Shias, a conflict that has raged within Islam for over a thousand years.

ISLAM POLITICIZED

The key to the Afghan Mujahideen's defeat of the Soviet Army lay largely in the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the support it generated in the global Islamic community. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how

¹³ Ibid., 60.

¹⁴ Ibid.

the phenomenon applied itself in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a whole. Bernard Lewis, Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, discusses Islamic fundamentalism and the roots of its opposition to the west and western cultural ideals, in his article entitled *The Roots of Muslim Rage*. He deals with classical Islam and the division of mankind into two groups: the "House of Islam" and the "House of Unbelief," which all good Muslims should ultimately try to bring to true Islam. More significant, "even inside the Islamic lands, according to the view of the Muslim radicals, *the faith of Islam has been undermined and the law of Islam has been abrogated*."¹⁵ Lewis concludes that the move towards fundamentalist Islam "is no less than a clash of civilizations - the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both."¹⁶ Using the insight gained from Lewis, it is logical to assume that in Afghanistan, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism was directly linked to the encroachment of non-Islamic ideals and secularism upon the daily life of the Muslim people. It then becomes a religious duty for not only Afghani Muslims, but those in the global community of Islam as well, to expel the infidels and return Afghanistan to Islamic purity. Interestingly, fundamentalism and Islamic unity only became an issue in Afghanistan after the Soviets intervened in

¹⁵ Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Outrage," *The Atlantic Monthly*, (1990): 47.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

1979 and provided the "infidel", thereby temporarily superceding the desire for autonomy.

Pinar Akcali applied this logic to the Afghanistan situation, arguing that the primary reason for the Soviet failure in Afghanistan was that "groups which previously were not united, came together and announced a holy war against the unfaithful."¹⁷ Additionally, the Afghan people rediscovered religious solidarity with other Afghans and the global Muslim community.¹⁸ Keeping in mind the ideas presented by Lewis on Muslim rage, it is easy to see why the attempt to replace an Islamic government, albeit flawed, with a Soviet backed atheist ideology elicited a strong negative response from the global Islamic community. In recent times, no Islamic country had come under such a direct attack. In response to this threat, Afghanistan became a gathering place for many of the Muslim worlds' conservative and fundamentalist militants, as members of the mujahideen.

While this move toward fundamentalist Islam may have helped win the war, it also may have been the wars most tragic result, as Islamist parties experienced expanded membership in the post-Soviet era, and new conservative parties were founded.¹⁹ Additionally, the further isolation of

¹⁷ Pinar Akcali, "Islam as a 'common bond' in Central Asia: Islamic Renaissance Party and the Afghan Mujahidin," *Central Asian Survey* 17, no. 2 (June 1998): 275.

¹⁸ Ibid., 278.

¹⁹ Weiner and Banuazizi, *Politics of Social Transformation*, 81.

the Shia Hazaras from their Sunni countrymen inadvertently made Afghanistan a religious battlefield between greater Islam's opposing factions. This has translated directly to external support provided by Saudi Arabian led Sunnis and Iranian led Shias in an effort to fight a proxy religious war on Afghani soil.

Fundamentalist Islam also stresses that "a real Islamic society . . . is achieved through political means. . . . The state is the key to the transformation of society."²⁰ This fundamentalist principle does not recognize that the struggle the mujahideen fought against the Soviet occupation began as a fight against the governments forced social reform and threatened autonomy. All of these factors led to a complete fracture of Afghan society after the Soviet withdrawal and contributed to civil war. Barnett Rubin, a prominent writer on Afghanistan and the Taliban, put it best:

The main effect of the war [Soviet occupation], . . . however, was not to transfer power but to fragment it. . . . No political force . . . has the power to formulate policy for the transformation of society. All are likely to be consumed by power struggles and little else for the foreseeable future.²¹

This fracturing of Afghan society and the subsequent break out of civil war left Afghans facing a decidedly different political landscape. The crucial principle of autonomy each faction had fought for remained, but after

²⁰ Ibid., 76.

²¹ Ibid., 221.

a decade of fighting each was better prepared to defend it. An unfortunate remnant of the Soviet occupation, the strengthened ties between the warring factions and their regional backers, only served to place added firepower and incentive in the hands of various leaders. The result was a vicious struggle for power, and Afghanistan appeared to be heading toward a state of institutionalized violence and total anarchy.

CIVIL WAR

In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's departure in 1989, the Soviet backed communist PDPA government remained in power under the leadership of President Muhammad Najibullah. Immediately, the Mujahideen formed the United States and Pakistan backed Afghan Interim Government, in opposition to the PDPA.²² However, it was three years before they defeated the Najibullah regime in 1992, as the PDPA remained in power even after the Soviet Union fell in 1991. From 1992 through 1996, the capital city of Kabul was a battleground on which the members of the Afghan Interim Government fought for control of the central government.

Interestingly, it was the Tajik led Jamiat-i-Islami, and not a Pushtun party that emerged to take control of the central government in 1992. Certainly they benefited from the strongest political and military leadership. The leader of the group, Burhannudin Rabbani, was an Islamic theologian

²² Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and The New Order in Afghanistan* (New York, New York: Zed Books Ltd., 1999), 36.

who believed in Islamist ideals and wished to move toward an Islamic government and return to traditional cultural ideals. The military leader of the party was Ahmed Shah Masoud, one of the most celebrated Mujahideen commanders to emerge from the war.²³

Hisb-e-Islami (Hikmatyar) was a Pushtun party led by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, an Islamist who sought to implement a government based on the soviet model and impose drastic changes on Afghani customs, Islamic practices, and society. He relied heavily on educated young radicals for recruits and enjoyed the support of Pakistan, up to the arrival of the Taliban in 1994. Hikmatyar's greatest strength was the ability to use Pakistan's support to bolster his party, and he eventually joined Rabbani's government as Prime Minister shortly before the Taliban took Kabul in September 1996.²⁴

Hisb-e-Islami (Khalis) split from Hisb-e-Islami in 1979 under the leadership of a young tribal leader, Younis Khalis. Khalis was trained in Islamic theology at the Deoband School in Delhi and had radical Islamist leanings. He based his leadership on the tribal patriarch tradition and drew his strength from local commanders and religious leaders in southeast Afghanistan. Mullah Mohhamad Omar, the leader of the Taliban, fought

²³ Ibid., 30.

²⁴ Ibid., 31.

with Hisb-e-Islami (Khalis) during the war of resistance.²⁵

Ittihad-i-Islami was lead by Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf, a theologian with strong ideological leanings towards Wahabbi Islam and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He began his political career under the tutelage of Rabbani in Kabul and eventually formed his own party while exiled in Pakistan. The party denied any undue loyalty to Saudi Arabia, yet strongly opposed the Shia minority in Afghanistan and fell in line with Saudi Arabia on issues involving Iran.²⁶

Hisb-e-Whadat, the dominant Shia party, was formed by the Iranian government to provide an umbrella organization in support of their efforts to expand their influence in Afghanistan. The party was led by Abdul Ali Mazari and focused primarily on maintaining its own religious, political, and cultural autonomy. By 1994, the Hisb-e-Whadat had become a significant player in the war, specifically in Kabul.²⁷

Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami-yi - Afghanistan (NIMA) was the final significant participant in the civil war and fell under the leadership of the Uzbek military commander Rashid Dostum. Dostum's forces had fought against the Mujahideen between 1989 and 1992, as the caretaker government of Muhammad Najibullah tried to remain in power. In fact,

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 32.

²⁷ Ibid., 34.

Dostum's alliance with Masoud and Jamiat-I-Islami set the stage for the fall of Najibullah's government and ushered in Rabbani and the civil war.²⁸

TALIBAN

In 1994 a group of students and former Mujahideen, trained in Pakistani and Afghani madrassas,²⁹ entered the Afghanistan power struggle as a new and powerful force and redefined the political dynamic. The Taliban is primarily Pashtun, considered to be backed by Pakistan, and adheres to a conservative version of fundamentalist Sunni Islam. Taliban claim to have evolved out of an effort to bring peace and stability to its home province of Kandahar, after which it began to rapidly expand.³⁰ Prior to looking at the changes the Taliban brought to Afghani politics and society, it may be instructive to better understand who the leader of the Taliban is. Mullah Mohhamad Omar, the undisputed leader of the Taliban, was born in the central province of Uruzgan in 1962. He studied in several madrassas outside of Afghanistan (Quetta, Pakistan) prior to joining the jihad against the Soviet occupation. During the war of resistance he fought as a commander and gained a reputation as an outstanding leader. His losing an eye in battle also served to enhance his mythical stature, as he is

²⁸ Ibid., 38.

²⁹ A madrassa is a rural Islamic religious school based on the Deobandi tradition.

³⁰ Taliban Islamic Movement as a Grass Roots Movement, *Taleban* [Taliban Home Page on-line]; available from <http://www.taleban.com/>; Internet: accessed on 26 April 1999.

referred to as "the one eyed prophet".³¹

To outsiders, Mullah Omar is a complete mystery as he refuses interviews and remains a political recluse who lives and rules like Ayatollah Khomeini in post-revolution Iran.³² To his followers he is the Prince of Islam, as demonstrated by his being anointed *Amir al-mu'minin*, commander of the believers, by a group of mullahs and religious leaders on April 3, 1996.³³ This is a title only bestowed twice before in Islamic history, the last being in the twelfth century.³⁴ Regarding Mullah Omar, one member of the Taliban's executive council states, "like our Prophet Mohammed, God has bestowed this human being with many abilities. He is a good teacher, a politician and military man. He is very pious, he is very kind, and he is very just."³⁵

The aforementioned emergence of Islamic fundamentalism during the Soviet occupation provides a credible and direct link to the origins of the Taliban and their ideas. The Taliban wisely associates itself with the origins of the resistance movement and distances itself from assertions that it seemingly emerged out of nowhere in 1994. With this in mind the Taliban

³¹ "Who is Mullah Mohamad Omar?," [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 26 April 1999.

³² Jonathan Steele, "Taliban's Moderate Fundamentalist," *The Guardian*, 4 January 1997, p. 14, [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 25 April 1999.

³³ Barnett Rubin, "Afghanistan under the Taliban," *Current History*, (February 1999): 81.

³⁴ Alex Spillius, "Prince of Darkness Leading Afghans into the middle ages," *The Daily Telegraph*, p. 19 [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 25 April 1999.

³⁵ Ibid.

cite the first *Fatwa* issued against the Soviet occupation, given by several Ulema of the Deeni Madaris tradition, to which it claims an ideological linkage.³⁶ The Taliban also claims that it was involved in philosophical opposition to the Soviet's atheist ideology and corruption prior to the invasion in 1978. This is largely due to its leadership's status as religious scholars and students of Islam. Therefore, the Taliban can co-opt fundamentalism's emergence in opposition to the Soviet occupation in general. This opposition took on a more militant nature in response to the invasion.

Thus, the Taleban [sic] changed their strategy and called on the nation to take up arms and render resistance against the atheist regime and its collaborators. Within a short period, the struggle that began with the help of a handful of devout Islamic teachers and students took national proportions and began to shake and frighten the communist regime.³⁷

For those subscribing to the Taliban's reform rhetoric, a group of religious scholars embarked on a mission in early 1994, partly as the result of divine guidance received by their leader Mullah Omar as well as in response to the social decay and corruption of war torn Afghanistan. Legend has it that Mullah Omar had a dream and the Holy Prophet appeared to him and directed him to bring peace to Afghanistan, after which he began to gather together men to fight his holy war.³⁸ A more plausible

³⁶ "The Movement of Taliban," p. 2 [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 26 April 1999.

³⁷ "Taleban Islamic Movement as a Grass Roots Movement," p.1.

³⁸ "The Movement of the Taliban," p.8.

explanation is that Mullah Omar acted in response to the social corruption and practice of impure, western influenced Islam prevalent in Afghanistan at the time.

Undeniably, the Taliban embarked on a mission to eradicate crime and reform Afghani society in the summer of 1994, beginning in its homeland of Kandahar. The Taliban's numbers expanded from the original 60 to 70 members, as its reputation grew and their successes multiplied. In November of 1994, Mullah Omar's scholars gained control of Kandahar and for the first time implemented their version of Islamic law. From Kandahar the Taliban began to expand to the other provinces of Afghanistan, taking the capital, Kabul, in September of 1996.

To understand the Taliban ideology, it is necessary to analyze the ideology of the madrassas in which they studied. The leaders of the Taliban are not simply mullahs, but mullahs belonging to the Deobandi movement.³⁹ Deobandi ideology is derived from a 19th century Muslim reform movement in India, which occurred in the movements' namesake town in India.⁴⁰ The Deobandi's looked to the past for inspiration to an 18th century Indian Muslim thinker named Shah Waliullah. Shah Waliullah in

³⁹ Barnett Rubin, "Afghanistan under the Taliban," 81 – 82. Rubin provides an excellent link between the Taliban and Deobandi Madrasas in Pakistan. He also gives an abbreviated analysis of Deobandi ideology.

⁴⁰ Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982) Metcalf's book goes into great detail on Deobandi ideology and the practice of Madrasah Islamic education.

turn was heavily influenced by the ideas of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab of Saudi Arabia. The followers of Abdul Wahhab's ideas are commonly known as Wahhabis, in which the Taliban, by way of their Deobandi education, are included.

Tracing the Taliban back to its Deobandi roots is instructive for several reasons. First the Taliban's focus on imposing the Sharia⁴¹ and their rejection of ijtiḥad⁴² are derived directly from Deobandi principles. Deobandis also hold a very restrictive view of women's social roles.⁴³ A second important factor is the link to Saudi Arabian philosophical and material support, gained via their joint belief in Wahhabi ideology. One of the fundamental beliefs of early Deobandi reformers was that the interpretation of Islamic law was a role solely reserved for religious scholars. "Uneducated Muslims could not make judgements on belief or practice."⁴⁴ Ultimately any linkage to Deoband also helps justify their claims to reformist intentions, as the Deoband movement is widely considered one of the early socio-religious reform movements in British India.

The final step to understanding the origins of Taliban ideology comes from understanding the nature of the leaders of the movement itself.

⁴¹ Sharia refers to the body of rules guiding Muslim life.

⁴² Ijtiḥad refers to the use of reason to adjust the Sharia in response to new conditions.

⁴³ It is important to note that the Taliban are far more restrictive in this regard than their ideological forefathers.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Jones, *Socio Religious Reform Movements in British India* (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 59-60.

Almost exclusively, the leaders of the Taliban originate from the Kandahar region, a Pashtun area in southern Afghanistan. As stated above, Deobandis believe that interpretation of Sharia ultimately lies in the hands of the mullah, so it stands to reason that the Taliban leaders' cultural beliefs will surface in religious interpretation as well. Cultural influence appears to manifest itself in Kandahar's status as the most religiously conservative region of Afghanistan, thereby contributing to the restrictive ideas of Deoband being exaggerated among the Afghan Taliban.⁴⁵ Additionally Kandaharans follow the Pashtun tribal code (*Pashtunwali*), which in many cases is more restrictive than the Sharia and does not embrace traditional Sharia views on ethnic equality.⁴⁶ The restrictive aspect is especially evident in a discussion of adultery:

Adultery (*zina*) should, according to the Shari'at, require four witnesses if it is to be proven; for the *pashtunwali*, hearsay (*peghor*) is sufficient, for what is at stake is honour (one's self-image) and not morality. (defined by the shari'at as what is permitted as opposed to what is not)⁴⁷

The ideological foundation on which the Taliban is built is now clear. Its leaders owe their origins to the Pakistani madrassas, in which they studied while exiled during the Soviet occupation, and they claim a heritage dating back to the beginning of the Afghan resistance movement in the late

⁴⁵ Barnett Rubin, "Afghanistan under the Taliban," 82.

⁴⁶ Olivier Roy, *Islam and resistance in Afghanistan* (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 34-37.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

1970s. The move towards an Islamist ideology is a direct result of the overall fundamentalist movement that took place in Central Asia and Afghanistan during the period of Soviet aggression.⁴⁸ This connection translates directly to strong ties to Saudi Arabia through a joint belief in the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. Its religious ideology is based on Deobandi beliefs, combined with the influence of a conservative Kandaharan heritage and the *Pashtunwali* code. The Sharia and *Pashtunwali* are not always in congruence, and where *Pashtunwali* is more restrictive, the Taliban tends to defer to its *Pashtunwali* heritage.

ALTERED POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

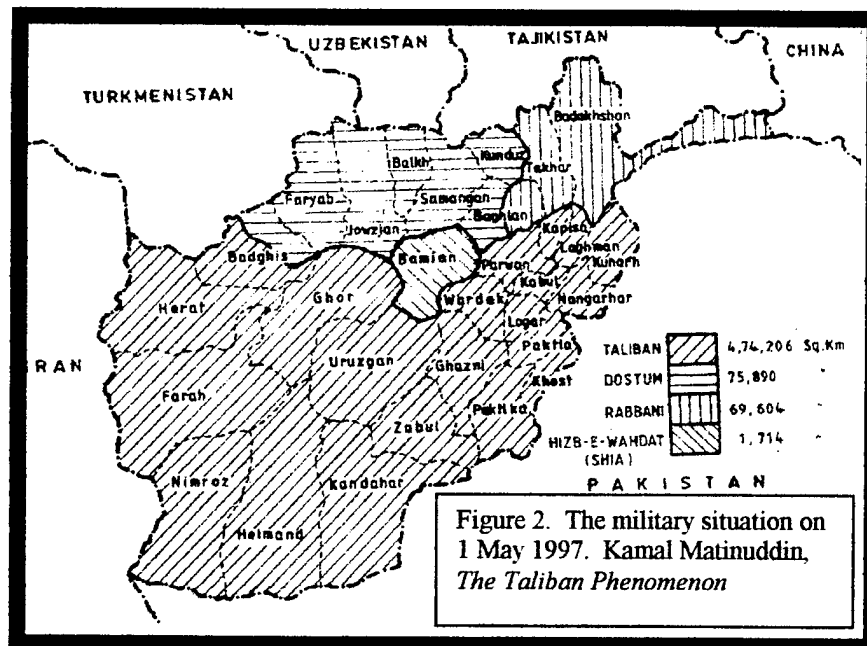
With the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in September 1996, the chameleon like alliances in Afghanistan shifted again. Quickly, the Taliban gained control of ninety percent of the country, mostly through coercion and newly formed alliances. An opposition emerged, composed of those parties not sharing similar beliefs with the Taliban and certainly not choosing to subordinate themselves to their rule. While the oppressive nature of the Taliban ruled areas has been a factor, a desire to remain autonomous or attain power themselves is the driving motivation behind the alliance's continued fight.

The opposition alliance is called the National Islamic United Front for

⁴⁸ For a detailed discussion of the move towards fundamentalism and the impact of the Soviet Occupation, see Pinar Akcali, "Islam as a 'common bond' in Central Asia"

the Salvation of Afghanistan, or the Northern Alliance. The group, comprised of elements left over from those fighting in the civil war, serves mostly as a platform from which to negotiate with the Taliban and international organizations. Certainly, political authority remains with the commanders of the member parties. Just as was the case in the fight against the Soviets, the goals and motivations of the alliance vary greatly, and in many cases their fight is fractured and disjointed, the biggest split being between the Shia and Sunni elements.

While the alliance has slowed the Taliban's advance, the advance certainly has continued. In 1998, Wahdat controlled Bamian and the Dostum controlled northern areas remained under Northern Alliance control. (See Figure 2)



However, by the end of 1998, both of these strongholds fell to Taliban forces. In July of 1999 the Taliban launched a campaign to conquer the Northern Alliance and consolidate the remaining 10 percent of the country, however, opposition forces maintain control of Rabbani's northeastern stronghold. (See Figure 2) Most important, the opposition has maintained its supply routes to neighboring Tajikistan.⁴⁹

The Jamiat-i-Islami, still led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, is considered by most to be the nominal head of the alliance. This is largely due to the Rabbani government's, Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA), status as the previous government and its control of Afghanistan's UN seat. The party remains predominantly Tajik; however, Ahmad Shah Masoud has increased his power within the party. The Taliban has forced Masoud to retreat into the Panjsher Valley north of Kabul, where he remains strong and popular.⁵⁰

NIMA (Junbishi-i Milli-yi – Afghanistan) emerged as a strong member of the alliance after 1992, due in large part to the military expertise of Abdul Rashid Dostum. However, in 1998 it lost its stronghold in Mizar-i Sharif and subsequently lost all the territory under its control. Dostum was forced to

⁴⁹ "Afghan Opposition Retakes Land," *Associated Press*, 5 October 1999 [news service on-line]; available from <http://www.infobeat.com/stories/cgi/story.cgi?id=2560587256-041.html>; Internet; accessed on 6 October 1999.

⁵⁰ Barnett R. Rubin, "Afghanistan: Persistent Crisis Challenges the UN System," Online Center for Afghan Studies, August 1999, p. 1. [research center on-line] available from http://www.afghan-politics.org/Reference/NorthernAlliance/NorthernAlliance_Rubin.html; Internet; accessed on 27 August 1999.

flee to Turkey and the party has weakened considerably.⁵¹

Hisb-i Wahdat-i Islami has now split, the original Hazaras and a new party, the Akbari faction, comprised of non-Hazaras. Even considering some philosophical differences between the two, combined they pose a significant problem for the Taliban. While the Taliban has been able to contain the Wahdat, they have not been able to subdue them. Additionally, the Wahdat played a significant part in the defense of the NIMA stronghold, Mizar-i Shariff. Most importantly, the close relationship both factions have with Iran forces the Taliban to handle them with care. The senseless massacre of thousands of Shias and several dozen Iranian diplomats after Mizar-i Shariff fell, almost led to an Iranian military attack on the Taliban.⁵²

Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan, led by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, is the last significant member of the alliance. However, with Pakistan now supporting the Taliban, Hikmatyar's influence has greatly reduced. After the Taliban took Kabul in 1996, he fled to Iran and remained in exile until returning to Mizar-i Sharif in 1998. With the Taliban's taking of Mizar-i Sharif in September 1998, Hikmatyar was forced to return to Iran, while the party supports the opposition from its military bases in northeastern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan. Hikmatyar now controls few military or political

⁵¹ Ibid., 2.

⁵² Ibid., 3.

resources and has very little say in the alliance's decisions.⁵³

SUMMARY

As discussed in the introduction, the ground zero conflict is the basis for unrest on which external factors can act. We analyzed the history of conflict in Afghanistan and discussed the status of the conflict in detail, but unfortunately the military situation is remarkably fluid and changes on a daily basis. Certainly, the Northern Alliance will continue to oppose the Taliban's advance and appears militarily capable of sustaining its stronghold in the northeast. The strength of the Taliban indicates that they can contain the Alliance and maintain the current boundaries. Additionally, the Taliban's ability to maintain law and order in the areas that they control appears to have garnered them the support of many Afghan people. According to one international Aid agency official, "Even if they [Taliban] are not liked by a part of the population, they [Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras] are silently supporting the Taliban. . . . If they had a choice between the Taliban and the return of the warlords, they would choose the Taliban."⁵⁴

The fundamental issues at stake in the dispute are the keys to understanding the participants' motivations and the links to their external supporters. The rise in Islamic fundamentalism and subsequently the

⁵³ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁴ Suzanne Goldenberg, "Getting Round the Taliban." *The Guardian*, 1 October 1998, p.19, [LEXIS-NEXIS]: Internet; accessed on 30 March 1999.

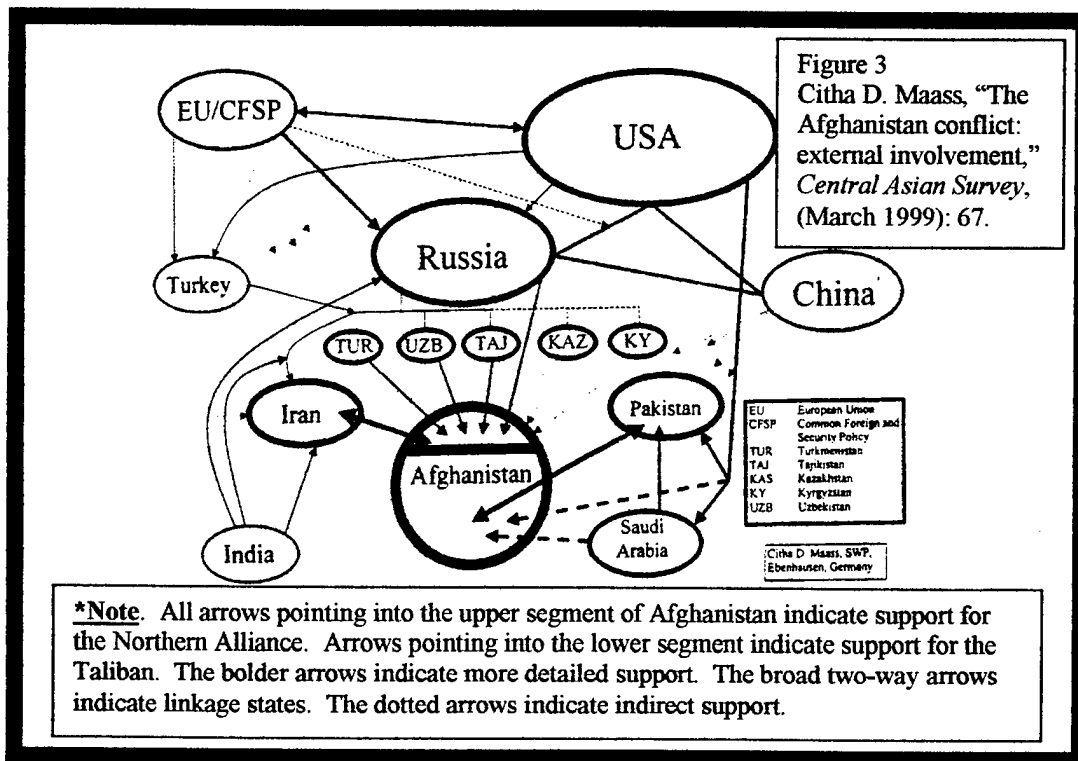
advent of political Islam in Afghanistan was a by-product of the Soviet occupation. While Islamic fundamentalism did not completely displace the traditional issues of ethnicity and autonomy, Afghanistan inherited the jihad's⁵⁵ religious fervor. Unfortunately, the personal agenda of the jihad's warriors often superceded that of Afghanistan, leading to a bloody civil war, the further erosion of society, and the corruption of Afghanistan's religious and cultural morals. Out of this hotbed of fundamentalist turmoil emerged the Taliban militia, led by religious scholars deeply rooted in the Wahabi tradition and intent on restoring traditional Islamic values and morals in Afghanistan.

More than ever before in Afghanistan's turbulent history, religion is the catalyst for dispute. Prior to Soviet occupation, religious disagreements were mostly limited to Sunni-Shia conflicts. Now, ideological differences amongst the Sunnis have emerged as well. The Taliban claims legitimacy through its restrictive version of Wahabi Islam and uses this as a basis for its efforts to eliminate the morally corrupt opposition. The members of the Northern Alliance view the Taliban's oppressive religious reforms as a direct threat to their religious and cultural autonomy. By adding Ideology to the previous issues of ethnicity and autonomy, Afghanistan has become an even more fruitful environment for external involvement.

⁵⁵ Jihad here refers to the legitimate war against non-Muslims waged by a *mujahid*.

EXPANDED GAME

Perhaps it is inevitable that the crisis in Afghanistan be compared to the late 19th century Great Game played out between Russia and Great Britain. However, the current scenario is significantly different, as the current conflict has expanded to include at least fifteen countries or international organizations. (See Figure 3) Furthermore, unlike colonial powers, modern participants can no longer focus solely on their own national objectives. The countries involved simply do not have the option of foregoing international opinion or disregarding the wishes of the Afghan people. Lastly, the participants are involved on multiple levels and at times appear to simultaneously support both sides of the conflict.



If a picture is worth a thousand words, Figure 3 is priceless. It depicts the involvement of all but one of the significant external participants involved in the Afghan conflict. The United Nations is missing. More importantly, the diagram demonstrates how confusing the situation is and the requirement for clarification. To fully understand the expanded game's impact on Afghanistan and subsequently develop options for resolving the conflict, the metaphorical Chinese Box must be incorporated.

As discussed in our methodology, the first step in examining the Chinese Box is stripping off its outer layers. Prior to analyzing the multiple layers of external involvement in Afghanistan, it is necessary to first organize Figure 3's various external participants into their respective level or layer.

The first level removed is made up of Pakistan, Iran, and the five Central Asian states (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, and Uzbekistan). As indicated by the lighter arrows in Figure 3, two of the five Central Asian states, Kazakhstan and Kyrgystan, are less involved in the conflict. This is most likely do to their not sharing a border with Afghanistan; therefore, ethnic affinities are not as strong. Notably, this group also excludes China, which does shares a border with Afghanistan. As Figure 3 shows, China's interests in Afghanistan are indirect, and it is more involved with the Central Asian states.

The second level removed is made up of Russia, China, Turkey, and India. All of these regional neighbors are indirectly involved in Afghanistan, with their Afghanistan policies intended to support some other national objective. Saudi Arabia's omission from this group is intentional, even though Figure 3 portrays it as similar to other second level countries. However, for the purposes of this study, focusing on Saudi Arabia's role as the Islamic community's bellwether and leader of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is more instructive.

The third level removed is made up of the United States, European Union, United Nations, and the OIC. The United States and the European Union are included because of their impact on international politics and their status as world economic powers. The United Nations, not identified in Figure 3, is the most likely organization through which international influence or assistance will be offered. Finally, the Saudi Arabian-led OIC commands respect in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Prior to analyzing each level in detail, it is important to discuss the term "national interest" as it pertains to this study. According to renowned political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, post cold war America has not been able to define its national interests, resulting in ethnic concerns dominating foreign policy.⁵⁶ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Dean of Harvard's

⁵⁶ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Redefining the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1999): 22.

Kennedy School of Government, writes that national interest "is broader than strategic interests, though they are part of it. It can also include values such as human rights and democracy, if the public feels that those values are so important to its identity that it is willing to pay a price to promote them."⁵⁷ Nye goes on to write that "moral values are simply intangible interests."⁵⁸

Joseph Nye discusses a method of clarifying national interests and understanding risks to U.S. security, which incorporates the prioritization of threats through the use of lists. The "A list" includes those concerns that threaten our survival, like that of the former Soviet Union. The "B list" includes those concerns that threaten U.S. interests, but not our survival, e.g., North Korea or Iraq. The "C list" includes those concerns contingencies that indirectly threaten U.S. security, but do not threaten U.S. interests directly, e.g., Kosovo, Bosnia, and Somalia.⁵⁹ The media's ability to dramatically portray human tragedies, inherently part of the "C list," has resulted in the "C list" dominating the U.S. foreign policy agenda. Yet, "A list" and "B list" concerns could have a far greater impact on American lives.⁶⁰

In light of the media's ability to bring the world's human tragedies

⁵⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 27.

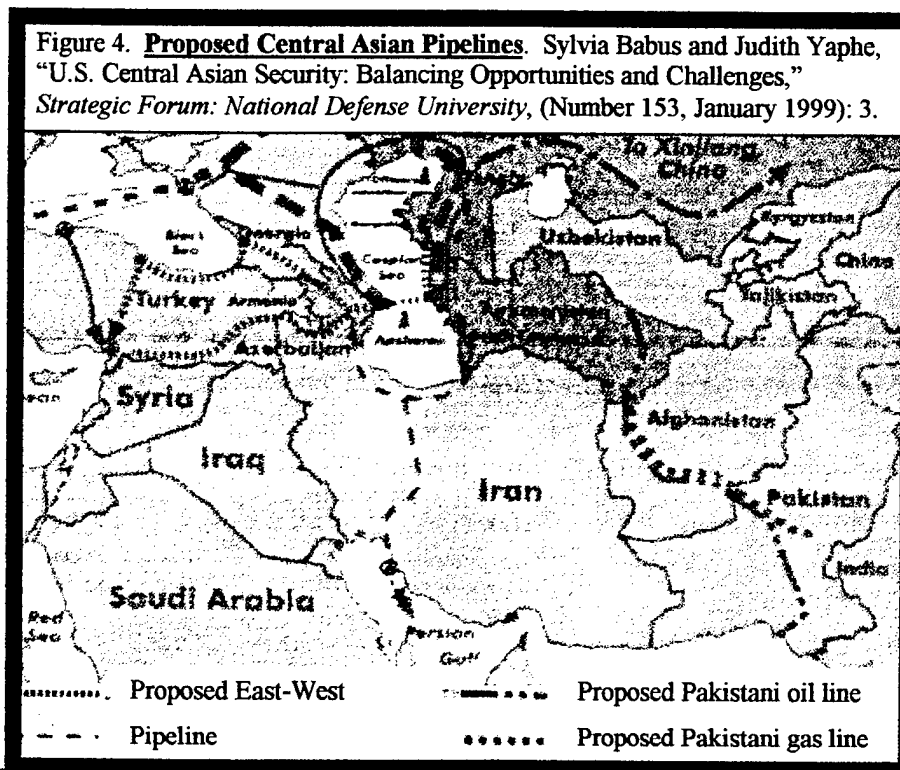
right into the living rooms of America, "C list" concerns will remain a part of our foreign policy; however, human rights policy is not a foreign policy. Somalia provides the most recent example of a "C list" strategic issue driving a failed U.S. foreign policy. The will of the American people to help starving Somalis quickly eroded in the face of dead U.S. soldiers on CNN. The prevalence of "C list" concerns in the Afghan conflict will be discussed in the following chapter on the U.S. perspective, which will clearly show that "C list" concerns currently dominate the U.S. official agenda in Afghanistan. However, the U.S. cannot be counted on to enact a foreign policy based solely on humanitarian concerns, as Hans Morgenthau writes, "universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation."⁶¹ The United States' relationship with China and Saudi Arabia are excellent examples of the U.S. choosing to overlook a nations questionable human rights record and lack of Democratic government respectively, in deference to A and B list concerns.

According to Ariel Cohen, the United States' most prevalent "B list" concern, not limited to Afghanistan, is "how best to secure adequate access to oil and natural gas reserved in the first half of the 21st century."⁶² Recent studies of Central Asia's oil and natural gas supply indicate that it is second

⁶¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 10.

⁶² Ariel Cohen, "U.S. policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Building a new "Silk Road" to economic prosperity," *Backgrounders* (No. 1132, 24 July 1997): 1.

only to the combined supply of the Middle East and larger than that of Alaska and the North Sea.⁶³ Additionally, the Central Asian states desperately want to reduce their reliance on the former Soviet Union for access to trade routes and strengthen their economic ties to the west. To accomplish this, they must develop an alternative infrastructure capable of transporting these resources to alternative port facilities. This has spawned regional and international efforts to influence the direction of the pipelines and port facilities utilized. As Figure 4 shows, three options are under consideration. The two southern routes utilize ports in Pakistan or Iran, and the other gains access to the Mediterranean Sea through Turkey.⁶⁴



⁶³ Ibid., 4.

Afghanistan, while possessing none of the above mentioned resources, holds the key to the transportation of those resources along the shortest route to the Arabian Sea. Access to the sea either requires assurances of guaranteed uninterrupted delivery through Afghanistan or the utilization of a longer passage through Iran. This effectively places Afghanistan's two most influential neighbors, Pakistan and Iran, in opposition. Therefore, pipeline politics directly impacts the Afghan conflict, as external involvement focuses on manipulating Afghani stability in an effort to exploit Central Asia's resources.

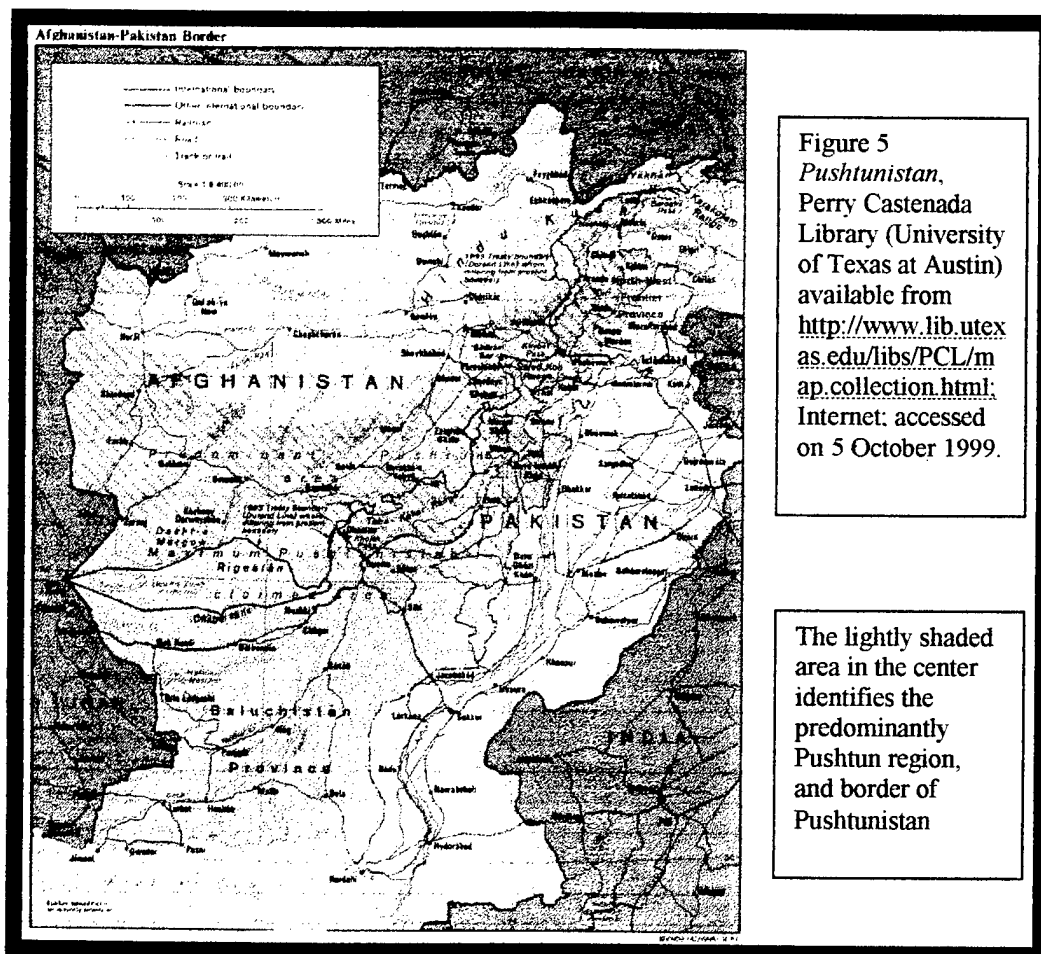
Several of the external participants in the Afghan conflict have "A list," or direct, concerns in Afghanistan. Each of the external participants in the conflict have "B list," or indirect, concerns in Afghanistan. All external participants hold humanitarian, or "C List," concerns as well; however, only those having direct ethnic or religious ties to a ground zero participant equate humanitarian issues with direct concerns. Therefore, in this study the majority of the focus will be on impact of direct and direct influence.

1ST LEVEL REMOVED

As previously stated, the first level removed includes Pakistan, Iran, and the five Central Asian states. These patron states maintain strong ethnic and religious ties with the various factions fighting in Afghanistan.

⁶⁴ Sylvia Babus and Judith Yaphe, "U.S. Central Asian Security: Balancing Opportunities and Challenges," *Strategic Forum: National Defense University* (Number 153, January 1999): 3.

Pakistan has strong ties to the Afghani Pushtuns and is the most significant Taliban supporter. Iran and the Central Asian states are linked to their religious or ethnic beneficiaries respectively and jointly support the Northern Alliance. The level of direct government involvement varies, with Iran's support to the Northern Alliance being government sanctioned. Pakistan recognizes the Taliban, but denies any state-sanctioned support. The governments of the Central Asian states and their assorted internal fundamentalist groups jointly support the Northern Alliance.



PAKISTAN

Pakistan's interest in Afghanistan revolves around its Pushtun dominated western border. Since gaining independence in 1947, Pakistan's domestic and regional policy has been deeply concerned with the Pushtun demand for a separate state - Pushtunistan.⁶⁵ As Figure 5 shows, Pushtunistan is potentially larger than Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Strategically, Pakistan has a direct interest in maintaining a friendly relationship with Afghanistan and stable border to its west, thereby creating the strategic depth necessary for its ongoing dispute with India to the east. The government in power in Afghanistan must be capable of restoring peace, quelling demands for Pushtunistan, and, most important, be pro-Pakistan. If Pakistan is forced to commit military forces to protect its western border or engage in Pushtunistan related civil disturbances, it is left with minimal maneuver space in a conflict with its hated rival, India.⁶⁶ (See Figure 5.)

Economically, Pakistan has an indirect interest in gaining access to Central Asia and becoming the gatekeeper for the exportation of Central Asian oil and natural gas. The economic benefits this would provide are obvious, but Pakistan could use this influence to benefit strategically as

⁶⁵ Anthony Davis, "Anguish Continues in Afghanistan," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (December 1996): 552.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

well. Pakistan would then be able to control the flow of Central Asian resources to the world, not to mention India.⁶⁷

Prior to the fall of the former Soviet Union, India was deeply involved in Central Asia, and Pakistan's influence was negligible. Likewise, Iran has had influence in Central Asia, dating back to the Persian Empire. By serving as the keeper of the Central Asian states' economic lifeline, Pakistan can reverse this and significantly increase its influence in Central Asia. Additionally, the Taliban would be forced to acquiesce to Pakistani demands or face the possibility of losing the economic benefits of the pipelines.⁶⁸

Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan has focused on Afghanistan's Pushtun population, reflecting its interests in Afghanistan. As previously discussed, prior to shifting its support to the Taliban, Pakistan supported Gulbuddin Hikmatyar's Pushtun dominated Hisb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan. In 1997, Pakistan's support increased, as it became the first state to recognize the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan.⁶⁹

The Taliban's unlikely rise to power in a relatively short span, 1994 to 1996, generated international suspicion that Pakistan was more than an ideological backer. However, the government of Pakistan denies any

⁶⁷ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," *Central Asian Survey*, (March 1999): 70.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Barnett Rubin, "Afghanistan Under the Taliban," 84.

official involvement in the creation of the Taliban and points to shared ideology and religious zeal as the source of support. Barnett R. Rubin, director of the Center for Preventive Action at the Council of Foreign Relations, disagrees and points to Prime Minister Benezir Bhutto's utilization of the Taliban in 1994 to secure trade routes between Pakistan and the Taliban's home base in Qandahar, as the beginning of Pakistan's direct involvement.⁷⁰ Others subscribe to a larger conspiracy, suspecting the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia of jointly creating the Taliban to gain access to Central Asian resources.⁷¹

Pakistan's involvement in the creation of the Taliban, whether through ideology or direct support, is debatable and fortunately not critical to this study. Pakistan's current involvement with the Taliban, however, is relatively straightforward and central to this analysis. According to reliable international news agencies in Afghanistan, approximately 4,000 Pakistani citizens were involved in the attack launched by the Taliban against Dostum's forces in July 1999. Additionally, ex-Pakistan Army personnel may be serving as advisors to the Taliban militia. It appears that, in an effort to retain deniability, Pakistan has stopped short of deploying regular

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Maggie O'Kane, "A Holy Betrayal," *The Guardian*, November 1997, p. 38 [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 25 April 1999. The article concludes that pipelines need peace, and the Taliban's military zeal offered the best chance to consolidate Afghanistan. The joint agreement between Turkmenistan, Taliban, and Pakistan to hire the American oil company UNOCAL to build a pipeline across Afghanistan appears to substantiate her conclusions.

troops in Afghanistan. However, the level of covert Pakistani involvement at a minimum indicates a high level of tacit government approval.⁷²

It appears that Pakistan's influence on the Taliban is limited. In fact, the rise of sectarian violence in Pakistan may be an indication that Taliban ideals, Talibanization, and Islamic fundamentalism are influencing Pakistan.⁷³ The flow of refugees, drugs, weapons, and terrorism from Afghanistan has threatened internal stability in Pakistan for over twenty years. However, the recent rise in religious extremism and sectarian violence is alarming. Sectarian violence has taken on Taliban-like characteristics as the Sunni extremist parties have become militarized and capable of influencing Pakistani politics. The Madrassas that spawned the Afghani Taliban are creating similar Deobandi based parties in Pakistan. Additionally, Afghanistan's Sunni versus Shia conflict, complete with support from Saudi Arabia and Iran, has spilled over into Pakistan.⁷⁴

The removal of Nawaz Sharif's government through a military coup on 12 October 1999 provides a clear example of Pakistan's vulnerability to fundamentalist fervor. Prime Minister Sharif's decision to withdraw from Kashmir in an effort to bring an end to the Kargil conflict, led directly to his

⁷² Anthony Davis, "Pakistan's War by Proxy in Afghanistan Loses its Deniability," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 October 1999 [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 8 October 1999.

⁷³ For an in-depth discussion of Talibanization and its impact on Afghanistan, see Rashid, "Rewriting the rules of the Great Game. Talibanization?" *Foreign Affairs Magazine*

⁷⁴ "Prospects for Peace in Afghanistan: The role of Pakistan," *International Peace Academy Trip Report*, February 1999; available from http://www.soros.org/cen_eurasia/aj21299.html/; accessed on 10 October 1999.

removal from office, as it represented an unacceptable subjugation of the military to civilian authorities. Equally as important, the fundamentalist elements in Pakistan that supported the Kargil operation, or Pakistani Taliban, began to turn public opinion against the Prime Minister and generated a tremendous amount of civil unrest. Nawaz Sharif's political position became extremely tenuous as his public support dwindled and sectarian violence increased. Therefore, while the firing of Chief of Army Staff, General Pervais Musharif, triggered the military coup, the Pakistani Taliban had previously weakened the Sharif government and created enough civil unrest to convince the Pakistani public that the military was its savior. It is unclear whether the military was in collusion with, or under pressure from, fundamentalist groups; however, it capitalized on fundamentalist activities.

The success of Pakistan's Afghan policy has been limited. The Taliban's success ensures that any future Afghani government will incorporate Pakistan-friendly leadership, to include a broad based coalition. Pakistan has also entered into an agreement to accelerate the construction of a gas pipeline, stretching over 1,400 kilometers from Turkmenistan, through Afghanistan, ending in Multan, Pakistan.⁷⁵

Pakistan's ability to influence Afghanistan through the Taliban, now

⁷⁵ "Work to Speed up on Central Asia Gas Pipeline," *Oil and Gas Journal*, 21 June 1999 [LEXUS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 28 September 1999.

or in the future, cannot be counted on. Ironically, the Taliban's success fueled the "Talibanization" movement in Pakistan, and Pakistan faces being victimized by its own policies.⁷⁶ It is also ironic that Pakistan's new Chief Executive, General Musharaf, appears committed to curbing sectarian violence and reducing the influence of the same fundamentalist groups that were so instrumental in his rise to power. Pakistan's success in Afghanistan hinges on its ability to control the exportation of Taliban ideology, while increasing its influence over Taliban policies through the creation of economic dependency. Pakistan's failure to gain economic influence over the Taliban through pipeline politics, and curb Talibanization efforts, may result in the expansion of fundamentalism and increased sectarian violence.

IRAN

Iran's interest in Afghanistan dates back to the Great Game between Great Britain and Russia in the late 19th century. Prior to the creation of Afghanistan and generation of its artificial borders in 1907, Persian language and culture were predominant throughout the region. As a result, Iran's post-Soviet intervention Afghanistan policy focused on reestablishing its pre-colonial influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia. With the emergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Iran has shifted its focus toward

⁷⁶ Yossef Bodansky and Evgeny Nikitenko, "Reflections on Afghanistan," *Defense and Foreign Affairs*, February 1999 [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 25 April 1999.

increased Sunni fundamentalism and the close ties the Taliban maintains with Pakistan. It is important, however, to remember that regional influence remains at the heart of Iran's interest in Afghanistan, and issues emerging since 1980 are either ancillary or of secondary importance.⁷⁷

Strategically, Iran has a direct interest in regaining its pre-colonial influence in Central Asia and strengthening its position in Afghanistan as a part of an overall effort to combat U.S. led international isolation efforts. Iran believes that the major threat to its security emanates either directly from Washington or indirectly through neighboring countries like Turkey and its ideological rival, Saudi Arabia. Certainly, Iraq and Saddam Husain represent a threat to Iran as well. Iran views the Taliban, which according to Iran receives U.S. support through Pakistan, as a U.S. led attempt to contain Iran to the east.⁷⁸

The Pakistan-backed Taliban's remarkable success is at the heart of the vicious proxy war being fought in Afghanistan, making Pakistan Iran's primary rival in the fight for regional prominence. As a result, Iran's interests in Afghanistan are in direct contradiction to Pakistan's. Therefore, Iran will continue to oppose the Taliban, or any other Pushtun dominated party, which attempts to consolidate power in Afghanistan.

⁷⁷ Andrew Rathmell, "Flashpoint: Taleban faces Iranian Wrath," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 30 March 1999.

⁷⁸ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 71.

A significant humanitarian interest of Iran is its position as Afghanistan's Shia minority's only ideological benefactor. Prior to the emergence of the Taliban, its status as Shia benefactor was a drain on Iran, as it was forced to handle the millions of Shia refugees pouring across its border to escape the tragedies of Soviet intervention or the Afghan civil war. The mistreatment of the Hazaras, primarily Shia Muslims, under the Taliban has forced Iran to take a more proactive approach. In response to the massacre of an estimated 6,000 Hazaras by the Taliban in connection with the fall of Mizar-e Sharif in September 1998, Iran moved 250,000 troops to its border and appeared ready to launch an attack on the Taliban. Eventually diplomacy prevailed, but Iran's intention to look after its Shia brothers in Afghanistan was confirmed.⁷⁹

Economically, like Pakistan, Iran has an indirect interest in pipeline politics and the exploitation of Central Asia's abundant resources. Iran wants to divert Central Asia's trade routes through Iran, bypassing Afghanistan and the Taliban completely. The potential economic benefits that come with being the primary outlet for the Central Asian states' resources are tremendous. However, unless Iran is able to place a non-Pushtun government in power in Afghanistan, it would rather propagate further instability to ensure that Pakistan cannot accomplish its objectives.

⁷⁹ Anthony Davis, "A Show of Force," *Asiaweek* (2 October 1998): 38. [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 30 March 1999.

Iran's involvement in Afghanistan began with the Soviet occupation, as Iran was recovering from its 1979 revolution. Iran was opposed to the expansion of Soviet interests in Afghanistan, and prior to the take over by religious leadership in 1981, its support did not differentiate between Shia and Sunni. As previously stated, ethnic ties did not exist between Iran and any of the significant groups operating in the Afghan resistance. After 1981, the religious leadership of Iran wanted to ensure its interests in Afghanistan were represented, so Iran strengthened its religious alliance with the Shia dominated Hazaras.⁸⁰ Therefore, the foundation of Iran's Afghan policy was two-fold; support the opposition effort overall and "strengthen its [Iran's] control over the Shia minorities and to use them as pawns. . . ."⁸¹

For their part, the Hazaras were more than willing to cooperate, as they were desperately in need of a strong ally to guarantee their own sovereignty and protect their religious freedom. The fractured nature of the war of against the Soviet occupation demonstrated the importance of unity and strong leadership, especially having already faced "a century of ethnic, linguistic and religious discrimination."⁸² By creating a united political party

⁸⁰ Willian Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban* (New York, New York: New York University Press, 1998), 118.

⁸¹ Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 213.

⁸² Sayed Askar Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study* (Richmond Surrey, Great Britain: Curzon Press, 1998), 190.

in 1990, the Hizb-i Wahdat-i Islami,⁸³ Iran was able to dramatically strengthen the existing alliance and consolidate the Shia dominated Hazara elements in Afghanistan to promote its own agenda.⁸⁴

As previously discussed, Persian culture and language serves as a strong historical bond between Iran and the southern portions of Central Asia. This has placed Iran and Turkey on opposite sides of a struggle for influence in Central Asia. This is important, because for Iran to regain its influence, it must make Central Asia dependent on Iran to export its resources.⁸⁵

The future success of Iran's agenda hinges on three things: continued instability in Afghanistan, convincing the Central Asian states that U.S.-led isolation efforts will not negatively impact their ability to export oil and gas, and winning the battle against Turkey for influence in Central Asia. The last two factors are largely out of Iran's control. However, it appears that Iran has the resources and resolve to continue propagating unrest in Afghanistan, both through the Hizb-i Wahadt and the remaining members of the Northern Alliance.

CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

⁸³ The process in which Iran created the Hizb-i Wahdat is poorly documented. They were behind its creation and largely control its agenda, but more research is required to understand the development mechanics.

⁸⁴ Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1995), 252.

⁸⁵ Edward H. Thomas, "Central Asia's Access to Open Seas: An Iranian Perspective," *Central Asia Monitor* (Number 4, 1998): 6.

It is difficult to consolidate the interests of all five Central Asian republics into one set of interests and policies. In fact, each of them has its own resources, leadership styles, and needs. Kazakhstan, in addition to being the most closely associated with Russia and China, has the largest oil reserve of the five. As Figure 4 shows, Kazakhstan does not share a border with Afghanistan, and as a result is less concerned with the Afghani conflict. Kyrgyzstan, also geographically insulated from the Afghan conflict, is a poor country largely dependent on foreign assistance for survival.⁸⁶

Of the three Central Asian republics sharing a border with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan has the most economic potential. Unlike Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan does not have, or appear inclined to develop, good ties with Russia and China. This places Turkmenistan at the heart of pipeline politics, as it is forced to find alternatives to Russian oil and gas exportation routes, or remain economically dependent on Russia. Uzbekistan is self-sufficient in natural resources, but not capable of producing enough to benefit from potential gas and oil exportation. Tajikistan, like Kyrgyzstan, is a poor country. Unfortunately, Tajikistan is not sheltered from the Afghan conflict and has experienced tremendous political, religious, and ethnic unrest since 1992.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Sylvia Babus and Judith Yaphe, "U.S.-Central Asian Security: Balancing Opportunities and Challenges," 1.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.

In his book on Central Asia's resurgence, Ahmed Rashid discusses the lack of foreign policy unity within Central Asia and states that "Russia's lack of interest forced the [Central Asian] republics to assert their own independent foreign policies."⁸⁸ However, Rashid goes on to state that it is in the best interest of the region to forge a stronger internal bond, and he sees the economic potential of gas and oil exports as a possible catalyst to creating unity. Additionally, any long-term security in the region is dependent "on how these states tackle the two main political movements in Central Asia: ethnic nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism."⁸⁹ Ethnic nationalism is primarily an internal concern and unlike concerns about Islamic fundamentalism, irredentist movements are not likely to originate in Afghanistan.⁹⁰ This joint concern has led all of the republics, with the exception of Turkmenistan, to coordinate their defensive efforts against the Taliban.⁹¹

Strategically, Central Asia has a humanitarian interest in a moderate broad-based government in Afghanistan, reflecting the strength of each country's ethnic affinity for its respective minority faction in the Afghan conflict. This is especially true in the case of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan,

⁸⁸ Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1995), 225.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 240.

⁹⁰ For an in-depth discussion on Central Asia and its efforts to deal with the resurgence of Islam, Afghanistan, and the Taliban, see Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia*.

⁹¹ Sylvia Babus and Judith Yaphe, "U.S.-Central Asian Security: Balancing Opportunities and Challenges," 3.

and Tajikistan, as they share a common border and ethnicity with an Afghan faction. In addition to concerns for the well being of their ethnic brothers, all three republics face the possibility of Afghanistan's disintegration and the subsequent integration of portions of Afghanistan. In Uzbekistan, there have already been public demands, not supported by the government, for the merger of the Uzbek-dominated areas of Afghanistan into the state.⁹²

The previously mentioned Central Asian anti-Taliban alliance is a reflection of Central Asian fear that fundamentalism in Afghanistan will spread into Central Asia, thereby hindering consolidation efforts. However, in our discussion of the Taliban, we determined that the Taliban was a derivative of Islamic fundamentalism, not its precursor. Additionally, many leading scholars decry claims that the Taliban can spillover across Afghanistan's borders. According to Olivier Roy, a leading Afghanistan expert, "the Taliban are not a factor for spillover elsewhere: the movement is strictly Afghan, Pushtun and tribal. They [Taliban] are the expression of a maverick fundamentalism, strangely unfitted for the contemporary world ummah they think they embody."⁹³ This makes sense when one considers the influence of *Pashtunwali* so prevalent in the Taliban ideology. Political

⁹² Anthony Hyman, "Power and Politics in Central Asia's New Republics," *Conflict Studies: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism* (Number 273, August 1994): 20.

⁹³ Willian Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, 211.

realism would also indicate that in the near term, Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan is a reality with or without a Taliban government. Therefore, in recognition of the Taliban's apparent domination of the Northern Alliance and in the pursuit of stability on their borders, the four members of the anti-Taliban alliance are ready to accept a moderate Taliban.⁹⁴

Economically, the Central Asian states have an indirect interest in Afghanistan's stability, as it facilitates the exportation of resources through Pakistan. This adherence to pipeline politics is most evident in the case of Turkmenistan, which has consciously taken steps to strengthen its relationship with the Taliban and alienated itself from Russia and its Central Asian neighbors. It is hardly a coincidence that Turkmenistan, the only republic not a member of the anti-Taliban alliance, was the first to reach an agreement on proposed pipelines through Afghanistan.⁹⁵ From a strictly ideological perspective, Turkmenistan's association with the Taliban does not make sense. In light of Turkmenistan's desire to secure several alternate routes for the exportation of its oil and gas, the economic reasoning behind the policy emerges. Turkmenistan "needs to maintain balanced relations with all those states that, potentially, might provide new

⁹⁴ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 73.

⁹⁵ "Turkmenistan signs power export deal with Pakistan," *Modern Power System*, 30 April 1999, [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 8 October 1999.

routes for a pipeline to world markets,"⁹⁶ and serves as a classic example of how indirect interests can supercede humanitarian interests.

The involvement of each Central Asian state reflects its ethnic relationship with respective members of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance. In light of the economic cooperation between Turkmenistan and the Taliban, the majority of the support comes from the remaining two neighbors, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan's support to the alliance, and therefore ability to influence the outcome, was greatly reduced with the defeat of Dostum and the Junbishi-i Milli-yi – Afghanistan at Mizar-i Sharif in September 1998. Tajikistan is in the position to offer the most support, as the remaining opposition stronghold in Afghanistan is under the control of Rabbani, Masaud, and the Tajik dominated Jamiat-i Islami. Additionally, this area shares a common border with Tajikistan, ensuring open supply routes. (See figure 2.)

The future success of the Central Asian republics' effort to extricate themselves from the influence of the former Soviet Union and realize their economic potential hinges on their ability to work together and minimize ethnic differences. Equally as important is the need for stability in Afghanistan, as this not only impacts the future construction of a transportation infrastructure, but may lead to unrest in Central Asia as well.

⁹⁶ Boris Rumer and Stanislav Zhukov, Eds., *Central Asia: The Challenges of Independence* (London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 126.

In the future, the remaining four republics may well follow Turkmenistan's lead and begin to work with the Taliban, recognizing its dominance over the Northern Alliance and placing a higher priority on their indirect interests.

The Central Asian states must also recognize that the resurgence of Islam is not limited to Afghanistan. For example, when the former Soviet Union departed Central Asia, there were very few mosques in any of the republics; by 1992 there were thousands in each of them.⁹⁷ According to Anthony Hyman, Associate Editor of *Central Asian Survey*, "the future shape of Islam in the Central Asian republics will surely depend more than anything else on indigenous influences and not external, alien ideologies unsympathetic to the majority of its people."⁹⁸ Furthermore, in light of Islamic fundamentalism as a reality in Afghanistan with or without the Taliban, the chaotic situation in Afghanistan prior to the Taliban's rise to power in 1996 is hardly an appealing alternative.

As is the case with Pakistan, it appears that Afghanistan and the Taliban may actually be influencing Central Asia. As discussed above, concerns over the Taliban and unrest in Afghanistan dominate Central Asian policy. It is hardly likely that the Taliban harbors the same concerns over the impact of unrest in Central Asia. Additionally, with the exception of

⁹⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* 45.

⁹⁸ Anthony Hyman, "Power and Politics in Central Asia's New Republics," *Conflict Studies: Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism*, 5.

Tajikistan, the ability to provide direct support to respective client factions in the opposition has been greatly reduced. Turkmenistan alone serves as a model for how Central Asia can influence the Taliban and Afghanistan through economic enticement and the creation of economic dependency.

As is the case with the ground zero conflict in Afghanistan, our analysis of the first level indicates that humanitarian interests, i.e., ethnicity and religious freedoms, remain central issues. However, direct and indirect interests, i.e., pipeline politics take precedence. In most cases the instances of ethnic discrimination or violence are only seized upon as an opportunity to advance the agenda of one of Afghanistan's neighbors. Sadly, these ethnic and religious ties are most often utilized to propagate the proxy war in Afghanistan at the expense of the Afghani people.

Pakistan's influence over the Taliban remains in question, and the uncertainty of Pakistan's political future lessens the likelihood that international involvement will support the exportation of Central Asian resources through Pakistan in the near future. Iran has shown the willingness and ability to use the Hezb-i Wahdat and its link to Afghanistan's Shia minority to influence stability in Afghanistan. Additionally, Iran provides a more stable domestic situation and, therefore, a more secure source of exportation than Pakistan. The Central Asian states are largely at the mercy of their more influential neighbors. Unless Central Asia follows

the example of Turkmenistan and begins to exploit its economic potential, its potential to influence the Taliban and Afghanistan could be lost.

2ND LEVEL REMOVED

The second level removed includes Russia, China, India, and Turkey. In general, second level countries are less directly involved in the Afghan conflict and lack the friction prevalent among first level countries. Most of their influence is indirectly funneled through first level countries. Likewise, ethnic and religious concerns in Afghanistan are superceded by the desire to address national interest, most notably pipeline politics. However, their interests are not monolithic. Russia and China fear Afghanistan's potential to propagate of ethnic and religious unrest in Central Asia and are primarily concerned with its potential to spill across their respective borders and cause domestic unrest. India views Afghanistan first as a piece of its Pakistan policy and, secondly, in relation to its current trade situation with the Central Asian states. Turkey views Afghanistan in relationship to its economic agenda in Central Asia.

RUSSIA

Throughout history, Russian governments viewed Afghanistan as the southern most frontier of the Russian Empire. It is in this context that Afghanistan was created in the late 19th century, and maintaining Soviet influence in Afghanistan was the primary motivation for the Soviet

intervention of the 1980s. After the fall of the former Soviet Union, the Central Asian states remained under Russia's influence and vital to the Russian economy. As a result, the potential spread of ethnic and religious unrest from Afghanistan into Central Asia dominates Russia's interest in Afghanistan.⁹⁹

Strategically, Russia feels it has a direct interest in containing the Taliban and limiting the spread of Islamic fundamentalism into Central Asia. Unlike the Central Asian states, Russia is not prepared to accept a Taliban government, moderate or not. Instead it suggests a coalition government, in which the Taliban is a member.¹⁰⁰ As previously discussed in relation to Central Asia, Russia may be incorrect to unilaterally equate the Taliban with Islamic fundamentalism. It is also unwise to ignore that the previously discussed Central Asian move toward fundamentalism occurred independent of Afghan fundamentalist support.

Economically, Russia has an indirect interest in pipeline politics, as Central Asian attempts to realign themselves with the West represent a Russian loss of regional influence and economic potential. However, for Russia, the direction of the pipeline is of secondary importance to the independence the export routes represent. Assuming that Russia intends

⁹⁹ Sylvia Babus and Judith Yaphe, "U.S.-Central Asian Security: Balancing Opportunities and Challenges," 2.

¹⁰⁰ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 77.

to maintain its status as Central Asia's primary resource outlet, stability in Afghanistan is seen as beneficial to future stability in Central Asia.¹⁰¹

Russia has also invested heavily in manpower and resources to secure the borders of the three southern Central Asian republics, imposing a heavy drain on its economy.¹⁰² As early as October 1996, Russia requested international assistance, emphasizing "that the UN Security Council and the leading global powers should assume responsibility for regulating the Afghan conflict in order to reduce Russia's own engagement at the southern CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] border."¹⁰³ This is significant for two reasons, the first of which is an indication of how much of a drain these operations are putting on the Russian economy. Secondly, and even more significant, is the fact that Russia recognized a need for international assistance to resolve a regional conflict. This is a clear indicator that Russia may no longer be strong enough to enact its influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan.¹⁰⁴

Russia remains heavily involved in the Afghan conflict, both through diplomatic involvement and the provision of logistic support to the opposition forces. Prior to the fall of Kabul in 1996, Russia was supplying

¹⁰¹ Sylvia Babus and Judith Yaphe, "U.S.-Central Asian Security: Balancing Opportunities and Challenges," 2.

¹⁰² William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire*, 260.

¹⁰³ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 77.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

\$20 million dollars a month to the Rabbani government.¹⁰⁵ Russia continues to support the Northern Alliance, with the majority of the logistical support being directed towards Dostum's Junbishi-i Milli-yi – Afghanistan and Masoud's Jamiat-i Islami forces.¹⁰⁶

Russia's weakened authority over Central Asia and Afghanistan calls into question its ability to enact significant influence in the region. Certainly this does not discount Russia's role in the regions future, but it is no longer viable to assume the dominance of Russia's interests and influence in the region.

CHINA

Some analysts simply choose to exclude China's concerns from their analysis of Afghanistan, while those including China relegate Afghanistan to the status of a proxy intended to harass Russia. However, this does not give sufficient credence to China's concerns over ethnic discontent in Xinjiang, its predominantly Muslim western province.

On April 5, 1992, approximately 22 people were killed during an uprising in Xinjiang, led by Islamic fundamentalist Abdul Kasim. China later determined that the Xinjiang Islamic militants were sponsored by Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami and trained by Afghan Mujahideen. Since 1992, China has

¹⁰⁵ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 176.

¹⁰⁶ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 77

taken steps to suppress Islamic fundamentalism in Xinjiang, and remains concerned about the Taliban and the prevalence of Islamic fundamentalism in neighboring Afghanistan.¹⁰⁷ China's added energy requirements have led to an increased reliance on oil and gas importation,¹⁰⁸ forcing a reliance on access to Central Asian resources.

Strategically, China's indirect interests in the region are focused on Xinjian province. China supports a multi-ethnic regime in Afghanistan and "considers the Taliban as the greatest evil that has ever ruled in Kabul."¹⁰⁹ This is largely born out of the potential spillover of ethnic unrest and religious fundamentalism into China's Muslim majority border region. The potential instability Afghanistan can inflict on Central Asia is also a concern for China, as this expands the length of shared border between China and potential unrest.

Economically, China's interests mirror those of Russia, as both wish to gain or maintain access and influence in Central Asia. In the case of China, it has expanded its presence in eastern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, hoping to meet the demands of domestic consumption.¹¹⁰

China's involvement in Afghanistan is largely limited to participation

¹⁰⁷ Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* 222.

¹⁰⁸ Sylvia Babus and Judith Yaphe, "U.S.-Central Asian Security: Balancing Opportunities and Challenges," 3.

¹⁰⁹ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 78.

¹¹⁰ William E. Odom and Robert Dujarric, *Commonwealth or Empire*, 78.

in diplomatic discussion intended to bring an end to the conflict and institute a broad-based coalition government. This lack of involvement is best explained by its intent to not let regional politics supercede its regional economic objectives.¹¹¹

The future direction of Central Asia is of great concern for China, as it grows increasingly more wary of Turkey's expanding influence in the region and the corresponding threat to China's own Central Asian agenda. While China is also interested in the future direction of the Afghan conflict, it has for the most part chosen to remain on the sidelines. However, unlike Russia, China's interests still carry a certain amount of respect. China retains its ability to enact influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan, therefore commanding international attention.

INDIA

India's interest in Afghanistan is dominated by its relationship with Pakistan and the age old dictum, "your enemy's enemy should be your friend."¹¹² Therefore, Indian policies in Afghanistan reflect its intent to counter Pakistan's agenda, rather than promote its own. To date, India has offered support to ground zero participants in the conflict not on ideology, but in accordance with their anti-Pakistan position. In the case of a future split within the Taliban, India can be counted on to support those taking an

¹¹¹ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 77.

¹¹² Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, 182.

anti Pakistan position.¹¹³ Additionally, India enjoys good relations with the Central Asian republics, dating back to the former Soviet Union.¹¹⁴

Strategically, India has a direct interest in Afghanistan, as its Afghan policy focuses on blocking Pakistan's previously mentioned efforts to create strategic depth in relation to India, vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Additionally, India does not want to see Pakistan gain a foothold in Central Asia. This will not only erode India's current relationship, but strengthen Pakistan's Muslim support to the west and further increase its depth.

Ethnic violence in Kashmir is a primary concern for India as well. Like China's Xinjiang province, India has a long history of ethnic unrest in this Muslim dominated frontier region. In addition to the obvious dispute with Pakistan over the ownership of Kashmir, India believes that Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan are directly involved in the violence.¹¹⁵

Economically, India has an indirect interest similar to that of Iran and in opposition to Pakistan. Pakistan making inroads in Central Asia threatens India's relationship with Central Asia. More importantly, if Pakistan is successful in carrying out its pipeline politics agenda, energy starved India will be forced to deal with Pakistan as a resource provider.

India's involvement in Afghanistan has been a direct reflection of its

¹¹³ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 74.

¹¹⁴ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, 178.

¹¹⁵ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 75.

interests and carried out with relatively little consistency. Prior to 1992, India supported Najibullah and his communist government. However, when the Pakistan backed Taliban threatened Najibullah's bitter rival, Rabbani, India quickly switched its support to Rabbani. As early as 1995, India was supplying spare parts to Masoud in support of his Russian made weapons and equipment.¹¹⁶ As long as Rabbani, Masoud, and the Jamiat-i-Islami remain a viable opposition to the Pakistan-backed Taliban, they will continue to receive India's support.

A strong alliance has emerged between India and Iran, largely the result of their shared interests in Afghanistan and joint opposition to Pakistan. This alliance guarantees India's future involvement in Afghanistan and gives added weight to its influence. India's Minister of External Affairs, Jaswant Singh, certainly made it clear that India has "vital interests in Afghanistan"¹¹⁷ in a statement given on 31 August 1999. Mr Singh also indicated that "New Delhi's past supine acceptance of the developments in Afghanistan was now over."¹¹⁸ To be sure, India feels it has an important stake in Afghanistan.

TURKEY

¹¹⁶ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, 178.

¹¹⁷ Afzal Mahmood, "Indo-U.S. Entente on Afghanistan," *India Abroad* (10 September 1999): 13.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Turkey has no direct interest in the Afghan conflict, as its focus is on Central Asia. As previously mentioned, one of the three options discussed for the exportation of Central Asian resources runs through Turkey. (See figure 4.) In this context, the resolution of the Afghan crisis carries significant importance for Turkey's Central Asian ambitions.

Strategically, Turkey has an indirect interest in the propagation of its version of secular Islamic government in Central Asia. The Turkish government also sees itself as western friendly and the logical choice as patron of a regional Islamic alliance.¹¹⁹ Turkey does not appear to be concerned about Afghanistan's internal situation, but, it does oppose the spread of Islamic fundamentalism out of Afghanistan into Central Asia.¹²⁰

Economically, Turkey has an indirect interest in pipeline politics. It is believed that Turkey's status as a member of NATO and its trade relationship with the European Union make it economically attractive to the Central Asian states as an outlet for their oil and gas. Additionally, Turkey has actively pursued membership in the European Union.¹²¹ Turkey also believes that gaining support for an east-west pipeline from the international

¹¹⁹ Anthony Hyman, "Power and Politics in Central Asia's New Republics," *Conflict Studies* 273 (August 1994): 14.

¹²⁰ Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian, Eds, *Ethnic Challenges Beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perspectives of the Central Asian Conundrum* (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc, 1998), 230-1.

¹²¹ "Everybody has to Change," *Newsweek* (1 November 1999): p. 56 [LEXIS-NEXIS]: Internet; accessed on 4 November 1999. The article focuses on new Turkish Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit, and the possibility of Turkey changing its position on Cyprus, and how that could open the way for Turkey's entrance into the European Union.

community and Central Asia is a first step to solidifying its position as a big brother to the smaller Central Asian republics.¹²²

Turkey's involvement in the Afghan conflict is extremely limited, filtered through the Central Asian states and directed toward the Northern Alliance. Turkey also supports the Alliance politically and through diplomatic channels.¹²³

Turkey has limited ability to influence the Afghan conflict directly; however, they are in a strong position to influence the region as a whole. Additionally, Turkey is one of the three proposed beneficiaries of pipeline politics and therefore at the center of the Afghanistan dialogue. Turkey's links to Europe and NATO are also important because of the inherent international credibility they entail.

Among the second level participants, humanitarian interests hold less emotional value and are easily superceded by direct and indirect interests, and are usually invoked only to rally support for other national interests. Even more than is the case with level one, the central issue of level two is pipeline politics.

Russia's influence in the region as a whole is in question, and therefore Central Asia's smaller neighbors, i.e., Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, are seizing the opportunity to expand their areas of influence. China

¹²² Anthony Hyman, "Power and Politics in Central Asia's New Republics," 15.

¹²³ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 73.

remains a very influential participant in Central Asia, and its status as a world power ensures that its views on Afghanistan will be taken seriously. Of the four level two participants, India has the most pressing direct interest in Afghanistan. Like its ally Iran, India can be expected to counter any future Pakistani initiatives on Afghanistan. Perhaps Turkey is the most influential, due to its unique position as a member of the European community, Islamic community, and as a Central Asian neighbor.

3RD LEVEL REMOVED

The third level removed is made up of several international entities: the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), and the United States. The United States will be discussed in the following chapter. The global flavor of this level significantly reduces its emotional attachment to humanitarian interests, with the exception of the OIC. As a result, all four are capable of using their respective influence, vis-à-vis ethnic and religious affinity, to influence regional politics and propagate their own national interest. Therefore, pipeline politics becomes the predominant indirect interest for all but the UN, as it does not stand to gain economically from the exploitation of Central Asian resources.

ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC), SAUDI ARABIA

As previously stated, Saudi Arabia's significant influence within the

global Islamic community, and therefore the OIC, facilitates this study's intention to analyze their interests and involvement concurrently. However, in those instances where the two are not in agreement, the difference will be clarified to eliminate any false analysis.

The global Islamic community has an important humanitarian interest in Afghanistan, which moved from one of shared Islamic brotherhood to one of partnership in a greater effort to defend Islam, Sunni Islam specifically, during the period of Soviet occupation in Afghanistan during the 1980s.¹²⁴ The details of how the global Islamic community became involved in the conflict have been discussed. However, several key elements are critical to our analysis and should be restated here. The rise of fundamentalist Islam in Afghanistan is directly linked with the tremendous influx of support, logistically and through the introduction of holy warriors, received from throughout the global Islamic community. The majority of the logistic support came from the main block of the OIC, the oil enriched Gulf states. The holy warriors of Islam came from all over the world. As a result the global Islamic community remains emotionally and financially involved in Afghanistan, even today.

Strategically, Saudi Arabia has an indirect interest in spreading its Wahhabite interpretation of Islam in Afghanistan and throughout Central

¹²⁴ Willian Maley, ed., *Fundamentalism Reborn: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, 9.

Asia. This ensures that Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states remain influential in the region and counters Turkey's effort to become the Islamic big brother to the Central Asian states.¹²⁵ Additionally, Afghanistan's status as the heart of the Muslim world's internal Sunni - Shia ideological battlefield continues to draw the interest of fundamentalist elements. For its part, the OIC has worked to bring about an end to the conflict in Afghanistan and proposes a broad-based government, which would include a moderate Taliban.¹²⁶

Economically, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf oil states, have an indirect interest in pipeline politics. As stated above, Turkey is using pipeline politics to gain influence in Central Asia and is therefore, working against the interests of the Gulf states. The political and sectarian difficulties between the greater Islamic community and Iran make the exportation of resources through Iran unacceptable to the gulf oil states. As a result, the Gulf oil states strongly support their ally Pakistan's attempt to secure access to Central Asian natural resources.¹²⁷

Members of the OIC have been the Taliban's biggest monetary supporters, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are the only countries, other than Pakistan, to recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's

¹²⁵ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 73.

¹²⁶ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, 182.

¹²⁷ "Turkmenistan signs power export deal with Pakistan,"

legitimate government.¹²⁸ The diplomatic maneuvers of the OIC indicate that it supports the Taliban as well. Unlike the United Nations, the OIC has left its Afghanistan seat open in the aftermath of Rabbani's fall in 1996. In 1997 the Taliban was invited to attend, as observers, two of the OICs sessions. The OIC has also indicated that it would recognize the Taliban and accept its regime into the organization if it can consolidate its position in Afghanistan.¹²⁹ It is important to note that this did not include the requirement of a broad-based government.

Islamic support to the Taliban may have eroded in late 1998, as Saudi Arabia withdrew its envoy from the Afghanistan capital of Kabul and asked the Taliban to remove its representative from Saudi Arabia. This decision is partially attributed to the global Muslim communities assertion that the Taliban is "primitive, cruel and an embarrassment to Islam."¹³⁰ Perhaps a greater motivation was the Taliban's insistence on harboring suspected terrorist Usama bin Laden. This is unsettling for Saudi Arabia, as bin Laden has spoken out against the government of Saudi Arabia as well as the west, resulting in his loss of Saudi citizenship. However, neither of these reasons is significant enough to override Saudi Arabia's indirect interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia, which it considers vital to its

¹²⁸ Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," 73.

¹²⁹ Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, 182.

¹³⁰ Christopher Thomas, "Islamic world disowns embarrassing Taleban," *The Times*, 29 September 1998 [LEXIS-NEXIS]; Internet; accessed on 29 march 1999.

national interest.

The economic influence of the Gulf oil states and the OIC in Afghanistan is significant, and the status of Saudi Arabia as the homeland of Wahabi Islam cannot be over estimated. Additionally, its position as geopolitical rivals to Turkey's expansionist designs in Central Asia, vis-à-vis pipeline politics, indicates the extent of Saudi Arabia's interest and its resolve to enact that influence in the future.

European Union (EU)

The question of the European Union's relevance in a discussion of Afghanistan focuses on the perceived multi-polar foreign policy, lack of unified agenda, and subsequent inability to effect its interests within the Union itself. However, the preponderance of research concerning the EU and its position in the international arena indicates that "the European Union has become a significant international actor without transforming itself into a nation state."¹³¹ In From Civilian Power to Superpower, Richard G. Whitman cites the importance of the European Parliament in carrying forward the EU foreign policy. He goes on to state that "the Union has developed a set of instruments that are both distinctive and distinguishable from those deployed by the member states."¹³² Finally, the Union has

¹³¹ Richard G. Whitman, *From Civilian Power to Superpower: the International Identity of the European Union* (New York, New York: St martin's Press Inc., 1998), 233.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 239.

developed the necessary decision making structure, instruments of implementation, and resources to ensure the representation of the EUs interest at the international level.

It is much more difficult to interpret the policy agenda of the EU in its embryonic stage, simply due to a lack of historical knowledge. In terms of this study, two factors are significant, the first being the fact that the EUs interests in global economics has an established precedent and is the area of its greatest influence. Second is the fact that its social agenda will likely mirror that of the United Nations and other global institutions. Therefore, in this study we will focus on the EU's indirect economic interests in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The EU sees very little economic opportunity in Afghanistan, due to Afghanistan's previously discussed lack of natural resources. The advent of an east-west pipeline through Turkey, however, carries with it a tremendous opportunity for the Union, as it could strengthen an already strong trade relationship with the Central Asian republics and Turkey. Turkey was one of the first countries to enter into a trade relationship with the EU precursor, the European Community, on 1 December 1964.¹³³ Additionally, Turkey is a member of NATO, an organization dominated by members of the EU. In respect to the Central Asian republics, all but

¹³³ Christopher Piening, *Global Europe: The European Union in World Affairs* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 1997), 85.

Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have entered into partnership and cooperation agreements (PCAs) with the EU. While these PCAs are not designed to facilitate future membership in the Union, they do provide a substantial level of economic cooperation and trade liberalization.¹³⁴

The EU's involvement in Afghanistan, and Central Asia as well, has so far been limited to the previously discussed economic posturing. Additionally, "the European Union is promoting its Transportation Central Europe-Central Asia Railway, highway, port, and ferry project, which could give an edge to European companies interested in the region's commercial potential."¹³⁵ While definitely in favor of an east-west pipeline and opposed to the severity of the Taliban's fundamentalist rule in Afghanistan, the EU has limited itself to diplomatic statements mirroring those of the United Nations and the United States.

The ability of the EU to enact its influence in the international arena remains to be seen. Certainly, the Union will be forced to do so through economic persuasion, as it lacks the military resources necessary to impose its will in a more traditional manor.¹³⁶ Perhaps its most persuasive argument is its ability to entice Turkey to act in Central Asia vis-à-vis a

¹³⁴ Christopher Piening, *Global Europe: The European Union in World Affairs*, 64.

¹³⁵ Ariel Cohen, "U.S. policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Building a new "Silk Road" to economic prosperity," 9.

¹³⁶ John Peterson and Helene Sjursen, Eds., *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe: competing Visions of the CFSP* (New York, New York: Routledg, 1998), 3.

reversal of its 1989 refusal of Turkey's request for accession into the Union.¹³⁷ Finally, the EU can use its influence on the United States and United Nations to focus their agendas on supporting an east-west pipeline.

United Nations (UN)

As stated in the beginning of this section, the United Nations is not motivated by direct or indirect interests in Afghanistan. That should not, however, preclude us from analyzing its ability to influence the future direction the Afghan conflict will take. The seemingly unbiased position of the UN reduces the influence of pipeline politics and regional economics on its policies, allowing it to focus on humanitarian interests and international security.

The UN Security Council's most recent statement concerning Afghanistan, given on 25 October 1999, laid out in detail the UN's Afghanistan agenda. The Council spoke out against the worsening status of human rights in Afghanistan and expressed concern over the Taliban's apparent disregard for the viewpoints of the international community. Concern was expressed over the increase in drug production and trafficking, specifically in Taliban controlled areas, so prevalent in Afghanistan. Of special interest was the tendency to back war-making efforts with the profits of the drug trade. The Council reaffirmed that the suppression of terrorism was essential for maintaining regional and

¹³⁷ Christopher Piening, *Global Europe: The European Union in World Affairs*, 86.

international peace, and therefore insisted that the Taliban end its practice of training and sheltering terrorist groups, most importantly Usama bin Laden. Additionally, it demanded the turning over of Usama bin Laden to appropriate authorities prior to 14 November 1999, under the threat of UN sanctions.¹³⁸

The United Nations most significant involvement in Afghanistan, other than a heroic effort by aid groups like UNHCR, is the aforementioned threat of UN imposed sanctions on the Taliban. This study does not discount the impact of the aid provided, but recognizes that this type of involvement is not designed to, or capable of, bringing about significant change. Sanctions, on the other hand, are designed to do just that.

The United Nations has also been involved in the diplomatic process, through the efforts of the "six plus two" group, a combination of Afghanistan's neighbors: Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China, and world powers Russia and the United States. Unfortunately, the group has experienced very little success and recently drew criticism from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. As this study has suggested throughout, Annan indicates that the members of the group are

¹³⁸ "UN: Security Council condemns Afghanistan's Taliban for July military offensive, sheltering terrorists," *Afghan News*, 25 October 1999 [Information service on-line]; accessed on 26 October 1999.

at once discussing options for peace and simultaneously participating in the propagation of the conflict in Afghanistan.¹³⁹ In the future, the solidarity of the UN Security Council and support for the Secretary General may be questioned on matters concerning Afghanistan, as the six plus two group includes three of the five permanent Security Council members, all involved in the conflict with individual agendas.

The effect of the United Nations' involvement in Afghanistan and its ability to impact the Taliban is not limited to the threat of sanctions. On October 30, 1999, the Taliban indicated that it is willing to work with the UN in order to attain its rightful occupation of Afghanistan's seat in the UN General Assembly.¹⁴⁰ This dangling carrot has been effectively combined with a big stick, represented by the threat of sanctions. The simultaneous announcement that the Taliban supports Usama bin Laden's departure from Afghanistan indicates that the Taliban's motivations to accommodate the UN are potentially sincere.¹⁴¹ Even if bin Laden's extradition is self-imposed, in an effort to relieve the international pressure being placed on the Taliban, the impact of the UN's policy will be validated with his departure.

¹³⁹ Matt Kohlman, "Annan: Group Hurting Afghanistan," *Associated Press*, 27 September 1999 [information service on-line]; available from <http://www.infobeat.com/stories/cgi/story>.

¹⁴⁰ "Taliban to remove misunderstandings in west," *Afghan News*, 30 October 1999 [information service on-line]; accessed on 30 October 1999.

¹⁴¹ "Taliban will accept bin Laden plan to secretly leave Afghanistan," *Afghan News*, 30 October 1999 [information service on-line]; accessed 30 October 1999.

Our analysis of the metaphorical Chinese box's third level confirms the importance of indirect interests, i.e., pipeline politics and regional influence, in Central Asia. Certainly, the OIC has a humanitarian interest in the ethnic and religious turbulence in Afghanistan, but even then, its concern over oil and gas exportation takes precedence. At this level, the utilization of ethnic and religious affinities or beliefs to gain influence has shifted from active involvement in the conflict to the threat of sanctions or withholding of economic assistance.

All three organizations are capable of influencing the Afghan crisis. The European Union's influence is predominantly economy based and to a large extent relies on the success of Turkey in creating a viable option for the east-west pipeline. The Organization of the Islamic Conference is well established in Afghanistan, and the bond between the Taliban's Sunni Wahabis' and their Gulf state brother is as strong as ever. Members of the OIC also provide the majority of the Taliban's outside funding, and its relationship with Pakistan and the United States places it in a position to impact the direction of any future oil and gas exportation. The United Nations' effective use of humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, combined with its lack of an economic agenda, gives it an aura of unbiased fairness. The joint decision that Usama bin Laden should depart Afghanistan, made by the Taliban and bin Laden in late October 1999, indicates that the UN

agenda has experienced a degree of success.

THE CHINESE BOX

Our deconstruction of the Afghan conflict, using the Chinese box metaphor, leaves us with two important conclusions. First is the preeminence of pipeline politics in all three levels. Even where ethnic and religious affinities are strongest, i.e., Pakistan and Iran, those affinities are used to strengthen the position of external participant's agenda vis-à-vis Central Asian resources. Second, all external participants must exercise a Hans Morgenthau principle of Diplomacy, "nations must be willing to compromise on all issues that are not vital [direct or indirect interest] to them."¹⁴² This forces the United States to synchronize its policy on Afghanistan with its overall regional policy and make compromises accordingly. For example, supporting the exportation of oil and gas through Iran, would require a major U.S. adjustment in its overall position in the Persian Gulf and compromises on humanitarian interests vis-à-vis Iran.

In the next chapter, we will look at the United States' interest and involvement in Afghanistan. Subsequently, we will analyze the macro-political picture from the perspective of U.S. policy makers. Hopefully, having deconstructed the conflict and organized the multiple layers of external involvement, an effective U.S. policy option will emerge.

¹⁴² Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 554.

THE UNITED STATES PERSPECTIVE

Our [the United States] goal for Afghanistan remains a broad-based, multi-ethnic, representative government that accepts international norms of behavior on issues such as terrorism, narcotics, and human rights, including the rights of women and girls. We believe that only this kind of a government can bring to Afghanistan the peace it so sorely needs. Toward this end, our policy has been to support no individual Afghan faction but maintain contact with all to urge a peaceful settlement. We recognize none of the factions as a government and have no plans to do so.¹⁴³

The United States Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs, Karl F. Inderfurth, made the statement above while testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 14 April 1999. However, it is important to recognize that the United States' Afghanistan agenda, while greatly influenced by the largely humanitarian concerns highlighted above, is influenced far more by its indirect interests in the region as a whole. As the previous chapter clearly showed, it is impossible to de-link events taking place in Afghanistan from the interests and involvement of the conflicts external participants. Therefore, it is important to look at all levels of involvement from the perspective of the United States, beginning with an in-depth analysis of the United States' interests and involvement in the ground zero conflict.

¹⁴³ U.S. Congress. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Afghanistan at a crossroads: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs*, 14 April 99, 5.

GROUND ZERO

The United States' concerns in Afghanistan outlined by Assistant Secretary Inderfurth above are by no means all encompassing. Even so, the statement does synthesize the United States' official position and therefore deserves further clarification.

The United States' indirect interest in terrorism in Afghanistan is not limited to U.S. demands for the Taliban's extradition and the subsequent bringing to justice of suspected terrorist Usama bin Laden. Numerous international terrorist groups train in Afghanistan and use its rugged geography as a natural safe-haven. Additionally, terrorists with links to Afghanistan have committed terrorist acts throughout South Asia and beyond – in Europe, Africa, and the United States.¹⁴⁴

Afghanistan's status as the world's second largest producer of opium and its position as a major center for the processing of opiates in general is an indirect interest of the United States as well. Distribution of Afghanistan's drug crop is not limited to its own region; heroin from Afghan poppies is found in Europe and the United States as well. Sadly, both the Taliban and Northern Alliance member factions are involved at every level and benefit financially from the profits. As a result, the United States has called on all Afghan factions to destroy the poppy crops and urged

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Congress. Senate Appropriations Committee, *Afghanistan Today: The U.S. Response: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations*, 9 March 1999, 1.

cooperation with the UN Drug Control Program. This has been largely ineffective and opium production in Afghanistan increased by seven percent last year.¹⁴⁵

In the United States State Department's 1998 annual report, all sides in the Afghan conflict were cited for human rights violations. The Taliban received additional criticism for imposing its harsh interpretation of Islam within the areas it controls and for its treatment of the Shia minority. Dr. Kamal Hossain, UN Rapporteur on Human Rights, indicated the extent of the problem, when he stated that the Afghan people were "becoming hostages in their own land or refugees while externally armed forces seek to rule Afghanistan without the effective participation or consent of its people."¹⁴⁶

The treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan is a humanitarian interest and it generates the strongest emotional response from the United States and the west in general. The Taliban is the focal point of criticism from all levels of the U.S. government for the reduced status of women in modern day Afghanistan. However, it is important to note that the status of women in rural areas has changed very little under the Taliban. Additionally, women's rights groups in Afghanistan are not simply anti-Taliban, but anti-Northern Alliance as well. The Revolutionary Association

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in U.S. Congress. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 4.

of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), an anti-fundamentalism group, supports United Nations intervention and the implementation of a broad based secular government, excluding the Taliban and Northern Alliance members.¹⁴⁷ Regardless of the Taliban's questionable status as the sole violator of women's rights in Afghanistan, United States Secretary of State Madeline Albright stated that the Taliban "will not gain the international respect they seek until they accord Afghan girls and women the rights they deserve."¹⁴⁸ The tremendous amount of media coverage this issue receives in the U.S. media makes this position by the U.S. State Department a classic example of how a humanitarian interest can supercede direct and indirect interests.

The ability of Afghanistan's unrest and instability to spread throughout the region has been previously addressed from the perspective of Afghanistan's neighbors; however, it is an indirect interest of the United States as well. Unfortunately, the official position of the State Department, reflected in Inderfurth's testimony, focuses only on the impact spillover from Afghanistan could have on Pakistan and Iran. Of much greater concern is the ability prolonged Afghan conflict, in which Pakistan and Iran have a vested interest, has to draw Iran and Pakistan into an armed conflict with each other.

¹⁴⁷ "On women rights" *RAWA's Standpoints* [information service on-line]; available from <http://www.rawa.org/points.html>; Internet; accessed on 13 July 1999.

It is short sighted and self-serving to assume that the United States' interest in Afghanistan is limited to those identified in the official position stated above. In fact, "Washington's Afghan policy does not touch upon critical U.S. interests."¹⁴⁹ As with the first, second, and third level removed countries, the United States' has a significant indirect interest in Afghanistan, dealing primarily with advancing its agenda in the region, i.e., pipeline politics. United States Assistant Secretary of Energy for Policy and International Affairs Robert W. Gee clarified this interest on 12 February 1998. Assistant Secretary Gee stated that "the United States has strategic interests in supporting the independence, sovereignty, and prosperity of the newly independent [Central Asian] states."¹⁵⁰ In a reference to economics, Gee stated that the US "will help develop and unlock these [Central Asian] resources and in doing so provide a better life for the citizens of the region."¹⁵¹

The United States' involvement in the rise of the Taliban is shrouded with enough mystery that it remains a topic of international discussion. Officially, the United States has adopted a stance similar to Pakistan and denies any official involvement. However, critics claim that the U.S.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in U.S. Congress. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Citha D. Maass, 74.

¹⁵⁰ Robert W. Gee, "Why is the United States Active in Central Asia," *Central Asia Monitor* (No. 2, 1998): 23.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

preferred the Taliban to Rabbani's regime and point to a secret meeting between Taliban leadership, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, John C. Monjo, in 1994 as proof.¹⁵² Additionally, immediately following the Taliban's taking of Kabul in 1996, a U.S. oil company, UNOCAL, entered into an agreement with the Taliban to construct an oil pipeline across Afghanistan into Pakistan. Rabbani's government had repeatedly refused to give its approval for the project.¹⁵³

As is the case with Pakistan, the question of the United States' role in the creation of the Taliban is not central to this study; however, its current involvement is. In addition to humanitarian efforts coordinated through the United Nations, the United States remains active in Afghanistan through diplomatic efforts. The primary goal of these efforts is the resolution of the issues discussed by Mr. Inderfurth. The active components of U.S. diplomatic efforts are the imposition of sanctions and use of its influence within the UN Security Council to influence the UN agenda in Afghanistan.

The State Department also appears to be enticing the Taliban, as the resolution of two U.S. concerns has been directly tied to a softening of the official U.S. position on the Taliban. The first evolves out of Secretary of State Albright's statement on the mistreatment of women. The second

¹⁵² Hafizullah Emadi, "New world order or disorder: armed struggle in Afghanistan and United States' foreign policy objectives," *Central Asian Survey* (March 1999): 61.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 62.

issue deals with the extradition of suspected terrorist Usama bin Laden. While discussing the progress of extraction talks, Mrs. Albright "stressed that discussions about recognition of the militia [Taliban] would not progress unless the bin Laden issue was resolved.¹⁵⁴ In both cases, the U.S. indicates that recognition of the Taliban by the U.S. is possible if certain changes are made; the remaining concerns expressed by the State Department appear to be negotiable.

The United States has the ability to influence events occurring in Afghanistan and within the Taliban; however, this limited influence is steadily eroding. In the past the United States' most direct path into Afghanistan was by way of Pakistan. Unfortunately, not only has the U.S.' relationship with Pakistan been weakened in the 1990s, but Pakistan's ability to influence the Taliban is in question as well. On the other hand, the United States remains a powerful international force and capable of influencing Afghanistan directly through economic sanctions, and, indirectly, through the implementation of a synchronized foreign policy that addresses the region as whole. Therefore, we need to analyze the relationship between the U.S. and the conflict's other external participants.

1ST LEVEL REMOVED

¹⁵⁴ "US, Taliban officials discuss expulsion of bin Laden," *Afghan News*, 26 October 1999 [on-line news service]; Internet; accessed on 27 October 1999.

The United States' relationship with the Central Asian states is in its embryonic stages and ripe for change and development. The United States' relationship with Iran and Pakistan, on the other hand, is based on long standing principles and policies, which would indicate a certain level of constancy and predictability.

The United States has taken a hard-line approach against Iran since the revolution in 1979. At the forefront of U.S. concerns is Iran's continued support for international terrorism. The Clinton administration in 1993, under the guidance of then Secretary of State Warren Christopher, adopted a dual containment policy intended to contain both Iraq and Iran, in an effort to maintain the balance of power in the Persian Gulf and protect U.S. oil interests in the region. Since 1993 the United States has maintained economic sanctions on Iran and worked diligently to build international support for its containment policy.¹⁵⁵

Policy analysts are watching Iran in the aftermath of religious moderate President Mohammed Khatemi's election in hopes that Iran will soften its hash anti-U.S. stance and end its participation in international terrorism. President Clinton may be among those looking to normalize relations with Iran. According to State Department spokesman James

¹⁵⁵ James Phillips, "Maintain international pressure and sanctions on Iran," *The Heritage Foundation*, 5 September 1997 [news service on-line]; available from <http://www.heritage.org/library/categories/forpol/bg1135.html>; Internet; accessed on 13 August 1999.

Rubin, President Clinton sent a secret letter to President Khatemi in August 1999, "offering improved relations [with Iran] in exchange for help finding the bombers of a U.S. military base in Saudi Arabia in 1996."¹⁵⁶ Despite the potential for change in Iran, the official policy of the United States continues to involve the containing Iran and the imposition of economic sanctions.

The United States' relationship with Pakistan was strained prior the military coup on 12 October 1999, due to Pakistan's conducting of nuclear tests in 1998; however, former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's withdrawal of forces from Kashmir, under pressure from the United States, indicates that U.S. influence on Pakistan remained. The military takeover in Pakistan increased the strain on relations with the United States and led to President Clinton's statement immediately following the coup that it would be difficult "to carry on business [with Pakistan] as usual."¹⁵⁷ Additionally, U.S. law prohibits the United States from providing assistance to countries that have been overthrown by the military. The diplomatic fallout of the coup is the continuation of U.S. sanctions against Pakistan, which is particularly

¹⁵⁶ "Clinton seeks Iran's help," *Associated Press*, 9 September 1999 [news service online]; available from <http://www.infobeat.com/stories/cgi/story.cgi?id=2561385318-od1.html>; Internet; accessed on 9 September 1999.

¹⁵⁷ George Gedda, "U.S. Cautious on Pakistan Coup," *Associated Press*, 12 October 1999 [Infobeat internet news service]; available from <http://www.infobeat.com/stories/cgi/story.cgi?id=2561606749-fla.html>; Internet; accessed on 13 October 1999.

damaging in light of U.S. sanctions against India having been lifted.¹⁵⁸

Assistant Secretary of State Inderfurth certainly indicated that the U.S. feels it cannot count on Pakistan as a reliable regional ally when he stated that "Pakistan now is neither stable, prosperous nor democratic."¹⁵⁹

As previously discussed, the United States' indirect interest in Central Asia revolves around oil and gas exportation. Many analysts feel that securing access to Central Asian resources and pipeline investments for U.S. companies, in addition to reducing U.S. dependency on Persian Gulf oil, is the United States' most pressing direct interests in the region. Officially, the U.S. policy on Central Asia

Promotes independence, sovereignty, and security of the states; encourages democratic government; develops free market economies; ensures world access to regional energy resources; prevents the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and combats narcotics traffic."¹⁶⁰

While the United States officially supports multiple resource exportation options in Central Asia, Assistant Secretary Gee indicated that an east-west pipeline "appears to be the most viable option which addresses our [U.S.] policy concerns."¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Shaheen Sehbai, "Military regime: US economic sanctions to stay," *Dawn*, 22 October 1999, available from <http://www.dawn.com/daily/19991022/top4.html>; Internet; accessed on 22 October 1999.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Sylvia Babus and Judith Yaphe, "U.S. Central Asian Security: Balancing Opportunities and Challenges," 3.

¹⁶¹ Robert W. Gee, "Why is the United States Active in Central Asia," 24.

In conclusion, Central Asia represents a tremendous opportunity for the United States, both economically and strategically. While the possibility for an attractive rapprochement, and subsequent long term pipeline commitment, between the United States and Iran exists, a major shift in U.S. foreign policy would have to occur in conjunction with an unlikely internal restructuring of Iran's religious hierarchy. Pakistan has proven to be unstable, and an unpredictable U.S. ally; therefore, it is also an unlikely prospect for any long-term oil pipeline commitment.

2ND LEVEL REMOVED

The relationship between the United States and Turkey is unique among second level countries, in that it represents an opportunity to expand U.S. influence in Central Asia. The relationships with the remaining three countries, on the other hand, serve as obstacles by forcing the U.S. to accommodate their interests into its regional foreign policy. In the case of all but India, the relationship is important in respect to future development in Central Asia and not events occurring in Afghanistan.

The United States' relationship with Russia has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. As discussed in the previous chapter, Russia currently maintains a monopoly on the exportation of Central Asian resources. This places the United States and Russia at odds in Central Asia, as U.S. efforts to develop alternate exportation routes will

ultimately reduce Russia's influence in the region and damage it economically. Therefore, the United States must ensure that events in Central Asia do not weaken Russia and counter the global U.S. agenda, which is to "avoid the reemergence of any kind of Russian radical or ideological expansionism that could return the world to global nuclear confrontation."¹⁶² If the U.S. pushes Russia too far in Central Asia, it risks the alienation of a nuclear power and further destabilizes the Russian economy, thereby creating circumstances ripe for the emergence of radical idealism.

The United States' relationship with China is similar to its relationship with Russia. However, recent accusations that China stole nuclear secrets from the United States, its provision of nuclear aid to Pakistan, its terrible human rights record, and the question of Taiwan's sovereignty are China-specific issues that directly impact the United States' China policy. As a result, the United States and China have a long history of strained economic and diplomatic relations.

The troubled history of U.S.-Sino relations makes the United States' policy of engaging China an excellent example of direct and indirect interests superceding humanitarian interests, highly ironic when compared to the isolation approach the U.S. has taken against Afghanistan in

¹⁶² Hafiz Malik, Ed., *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects* (New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 130.

response to less vital, indirect and humanitarian U.S. concerns. President Clinton, in a statement given on 7 April 1999, indicated that the United States would continue to engage China in a way that appears to include cooperation in Central Asia:

[The United States] must build on opportunities for cooperation with China where we agree, even as we strongly defend our interests and values where we disagree. That is the purpose of engagement. Not to insulate our relationship from the consequences of Chinese actions, but to use our relationship to influence China's actions in a way that advances our values and our interests."¹⁶³

The United States' relationship with India has undergone a major transformation since the two countries were on opposite sides of the Cold War, proving that "there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies, but only permanent national interests in the conduct of foreign policy."¹⁶⁴ During the Cold War era the United States foreign policy in South Asia tilted in favor of Pakistan versus India. According to United States Representative Gary Ackerman, a member of the House of Representatives International Relations Committee, "the State Department has changed its decades-old pro-Pakistan tilt in favor of a more balanced approach."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ President William J. Clinton, "U.S. will seek truth from facts on China," (Speech given by the President of the United States in Washington D.C. on 7 April 1999 prior to the arrival of Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji), *United States Information Agency*, Internet; available from <http://www.usia.gov/regional/ea/uschina/clintro7.html>; accessed on 9 November 1999.

¹⁶⁴ Afzal Mahmood, "Indo-U.S. Entente on Afghanistan," *India Abroad* (10 September 1999): 13.

¹⁶⁵ Aziz Haniffa, "Pro-Pakistan tilt a thing of the past, says Ackerman," *India Abroad* (9 April 1999): 18.

Representative Ackerman went on to say, "we want India to be strong. We want India to be secure. We want that not only for the sake of India, but also for our own American national security reasons."¹⁶⁶

Recent actions taken by the U.S. government seem to substantiate Representative Ackerman's observations. In September 1999 the first ever Afghanistan exclusive talks were held between the U.S. and India in hopes of developing what appears to be a convergence of the two countries security interests as relates to Afghanistan.¹⁶⁷ On 27 October 1999, President Clinton removed the restrictions on banking and military training imposed in response to India's nuclear tests in 1998.¹⁶⁸ This readjustment of U.S. focus in South Asia is important, as it implies that the U.S. will no longer defer to Pakistan's interests within its regional foreign policy.

The United States' relationship with Turkey, according to Turkey's Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit, is held back by Turkey's refusal to enter into talks on Cyprus:

Our [Turkey's] annual trade volume with the United States is only \$6 billion, and this year it decreased. Tourism is important for Turkey, but Americans constitute just 5 percent of those who come here. Joint investments are below their potential. There is increasing military cooperation, but U.S. military assistance has been cut off.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Afzal Mahmood, "Indo-U.S. Entente on Afghanistan," 13.

¹⁶⁸ Aziz Haniffa, "Clinton lifts sanctions on military training," *India Abroad* (5 November 1999): 14.

For its part, the United States understands that Turkey is a pivotal component of its Central Asia agenda. According to political scientist Ariel Cohen, the United States must adopt a "Silk Road" strategy, utilizing Turkey as its link between Europe and Central Asia.¹⁷⁰ As previously discussed, Assistant Secretary Robert Gee indicated that the United States favors an east-west pipeline, as it falls in line with the U.S. interests in the region. It appears that the United States is prepared to overlook its humanitarian interest in the case of Cyprus and focus instead on the benefits working with Turkey in Central Asia can produce.

In respect to its relationship with second level countries, the United States must take great care in Central Asia. In the case of Russia and China, an effort must be made to accomplish U.S. goals in Central Asia without generating a backlash from the regions two super powers. The U.S.-India relationship is tricky because the United States, having shifted its emphasis from Pakistan to India, cannot afford to disregard the interests of Pakistan's fragile government and facilitate the Talibanization process already underway. In its relationship with Turkey, the United States sees the greatest opportunity for improved relations and a joint effort in Central Asia.

3RD LEVEL REMOVED

¹⁶⁹ "Everybody has to Change," 66.

The United States' and United Nations' humanitarian interests in Afghanistan are one and the same; therefore, it would be redundant to restate them here. The Organization of the Islamic Conference and European Union also subscribe to the United States' humanitarian agenda, with the understanding that there is a significant amount of support for Sunni Muslims in Afghanistan, which originates from OIC member states.

The United States' relationship with the European Union, in terms of foreign policy and international security, places the EU in the role of subordinate, simply because of its lack of an effective defense system.¹⁷¹ A greater sense of balance exists in terms of international economy, with each holding an advantage in its respective economic base. In terms of Central Asia, the European Union and United States are pursuing parallel objectives. In fact, American oil companies are eager to invest private capital to develop the infrastructure required to implement the EU's previously discussed Transportation Central Europe-Central Asia project.¹⁷²

The position of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Afghanistan is similar to the humanitarian interest of the United States, with the exception of the aforementioned OIC Taliban leanings. Nevertheless,

¹⁷⁰ Ariel Cohen, "U.S. policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Building a new "Silk Road" to economic prosperity," 18.

¹⁷¹ Gilles Andreani, "Toward a Transatlantic Partnership," *Newsweek* (25 October 1999): 72.

¹⁷² Ariel Cohen, "U.S. policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Building a new "Silk Road" to economic prosperity," 9.

two prominent members of the Conference with established Taliban connections, i.e., Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, have recently supported the U.S. driven effort to impose UN sanctions on the Taliban if Usama bin Laden is not extradited and forced to stand trial for his suspected terrorist involvement.¹⁷³

The United States' relationship with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf oil states is significant in respect to future developments in Central Asia. As previously discussed, Saudi Arabia has an indirect interest in Central Asia that is not in line with the United States' interests, as it supports the construction of oil and gas pipelines through Afghanistan and opposes both remaining options. The United States must be sensitive to Saudi Arabia's interests, as it is the United States' most significant Persian Gulf ally.

As stated in the introduction, it is important for the overall peace process in Afghanistan that the United States develop a coherent, synchronized policy on Afghanistan and Central Asia. In relations to the United States' vital indirect interests in Central Asia, it is equally important for the U.S. to ensure that its interests are secured by placing itself in a position from which it can influence the process. The following recommendations will attempt to incorporate the information discussed in this chapter and develop possible option for the United States to adopt.

¹⁷³ "UN resolution on Osama: Cohen wins UAE support," *Dawn*, 21 October 1999, available from <http://www.dawn.com/daily/19991021/html>; Internet; accessed 21 October 1999.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A Special Report of the United States Institute of Peace, released in November of 1998, identifies three options available to the United States in Afghanistan:

- Option 1: Limited Involvement. In order to keep distance between the United States and all side of the conflict, the U.S. would defer to the UN, yet remain prepared to protect U.S. interests with missile strikes or other means.
- Option 2: Diplomatic Engagement. In exchange for its cooperation with the US on humanitarian concerns, the Taliban would be offered U.S. recognition, membership in the UN, U.S. support for Afghan pipelines, and economic assistance.
- Option 3: Undermine the Taliban. To install a government in Afghanistan more open to U.S. influence, the U.S. would work to overthrow the Taliban. Several methods are proposed, all involving a regional U.S. ally.¹⁷⁴

It is interesting to note that a highly respected U.S. government funded institute produced this report and the panel assembled for the discussion consisted of renowned area specialists from diverse backgrounds. Yet, the recommendations given fail to address the conflict in Afghanistan within the context of its regional and international setting. The result, as the options above clearly demonstrate, is a set of recommendations that disregard the direct and indirect interests of those external participants vital to the resolution or propagation of the conflict.

In an effort to involve the interests of all participants in the conflict,

¹⁷⁴ "Special Report - The Taliban and Afghanistan: Implications for Regional Security and Options for International Actions," *United States Institute of Peace* (November 1999): 10.

policy analysts must consider each option like the master craftsman handles the proverbial ship in a bottle. In the case of the three recommendations given above, the first option simply recommends the continuation of present policies and the other two require changes to current policies that are in contradiction with the United States' interest in the region. This would leave the metaphorical shipbuilder with either an empty bottle or two ships surrounded by pieces of glass from their respective shattered bottles.

In the introduction we discussed the need to develop any proposed resolutions from the outside in to ensure that the concerns of all participants are addressed. Having analyzed all levels of the conflict and come to an understanding of the interests of the conflict's participants it is time to address those interests and concerns as they relate to the U.S. and its possible options.

Prior to discussing those options, several important conclusions from our analysis of external involvement must be revisited. First is the recognition that Afghanistan is the battleground on which a vicious proxy war is being fought. Additionally, while the external participants in the conflict have individual and unique interests, the most prevalent interests are those directly related to Central Asian resources. Finally, we discussed the fact that humanitarian interests often are not capable of sustaining

national interest over an extended period of time, and in the case of Afghanistan are often used to justify involvement based on less honorable motivations, e.g., pipeline politics and political power.

Recommendation 1: East-west Pipeline

Clearly, the primary motivation for the involvement of those external participants with a direct interest in Afghanistan is securing access to Central Asian resources and expanding their sphere of influence into Central Asia. Additionally, pipeline politics is a significant concern at every level of involvement; therefore, the future direction of the oil and gas pipelines must be addressed prior to making an attempt at resolving other issues. Of the three options available, only the east-west option supports the United States' regional agenda. Perhaps even more important, an east-west pipeline can potentially reduce the amount of external involvement in Afghanistan by virtue of its eliminating the primary motivating factor.

The recommendation of this study is that the United States must aggressively pursue an east-west pipeline and fully incorporate Turkey into the process. The benefits of the east-west option for the United States have been previously discussed,¹⁷⁵ but the impact it will have on the other participants must be addressed. Within the third level removed, there is a conflict with Saudi Arabia based on its agenda in Central Asia and

¹⁷⁵ For a complete analysis of the U.S. interest in an east-west pipeline and the possible benefits, see Ariel Cohen, "U.S. policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Afghanistan vis-à-vis pipeline politics. While Saudi Arabia's concerns have to be taken seriously, the U.S. must secure its future oil and gas supply now, in anticipation of the eventual exhaustion of Persian Gulf supplies. Concessions will have to be made with the Gulf oil states to ensure they understand that they will remain the primary source of U.S. imported petroleum products.

The trickiest diplomatic effort will take place within the second level removed, as certain concessions and guaranties will have to be made. In the cases of Russia and China, they have to understand that exportation levels will be controlled, so that they will continue to have access to sufficient oil and gas to supply indigenous requirements. Every effort must be taken to work with Turkey to facilitate success, but Turkey must understand that there are conditions built into the support. Turkey will have to accept whatever agreement is worked out with Russia and China, and India's current trade status with Central Asia must be allowed to continue. Lastly, Turkey will be held to an diplomatic agenda in Central Asia that serves it and the United States' joint interests, e.g., secular government.

At the first level removed, the United States will have to make an adjustment to its current policy. However, strained relations between the United States and Pakistan already exist, so shifting the full support of the U.S. government behind the east-west option, and abandoning all support

for the Pakistan option, only requires a slight modification of our metaphorical bottle. In the case of Iran, this option facilitates our isolation efforts and, by virtue of its potential to limit Iran's future involvement in the conflict, will appease the Gulf oil states in light of our having opted not to support a Pakistan pipeline.

As we stated in the introduction, future unrest in Afghanistan cannot continue without external support. Therefore, by ensuring that neither Iran nor Pakistan will receive the benefits of a pipeline through Afghanistan, the prospects for continued fighting in Afghanistan are limited. If either of the southern options, via Pakistan or Iran, are adopted it would virtually guarantee an indefinite conflict.

Recommendation 2: Prop-up Pakistan

Pakistan is the most vulnerable of Afghanistan's neighbors and also the most susceptible to Talibanization. While the Taliban ideology may not be immediately transferable to Central Asia and Afghanistan's other neighbors, it is ready made for Pakistan. Therefore, it is in the interest of all participants, including India, that Pakistan be stabilized. At first glance this appears to contradict recommendation number one, but if the United States were to opt for the Pakistan option, it would only exacerbate Pakistan's problems. We briefly discussed the danger of Iran and Pakistan being drug into the Afghan war in an effort to secure their respective interests. As

discussed above, the east-west option has the potential to reduce the amount of external involvement and will certainly reduce the friction between Pakistan and Iran. Unfortunately, this leaves the United States with the difficult proposition of offering support to Pakistan's military regime in a way that does alienate India.

An in-depth analysis of future U.S.-Pakistan relations is a separate research topic; however, there are several options available. A critical element in any effort to build up Pakistan must include simultaneous discussions with India to demonstrate the benefits of Pakistan's stability to India. For instance, Islamists in Pakistan will take advantage of civil unrest in Pakistan to bolster their attempts to liberate Kashmir, or worse, if the military fails to restore order in Pakistan, its nuclear weapons may fall into fundamentalist hands. An option available to the United States is the lifting of sanctions and the restoration of military to military training, thereby facilitating efforts to rebuild Pakistan's economy.

Recommendation 3: Remove Usama bin Laden

Every effort must be made to remove Usama bin Laden from Afghanistan. Preferably, bin Laden would be extradited and forced to stand trial for his terrorist activities, but in the interest of peace in Afghanistan his simple departure would be beneficial. There are numerous reasons for the importance of bin Laden's removal; most significantly, he is a dangerous

criminal and sworn enemy of the United States. Unfortunately, he is dangerous to the Taliban as well. In addition to the harming Afghanistan by virtue of his presence, e.g., sanctions and missile attacks, bin Laden's training camps attract the Islamic community's most hardened religious zealots to Afghanistan. A successful rapprochement between the Taliban and the United States is unlikely, unless the bin Laden factor is removed.

Recommendation 4: Engage the Taliban

Unlike the other three recommendations, engagement with the Taliban should be conditional, based on the execution of recommendation three. However, several additional parameters for engaging the Taliban have been defined. Secretary of State Albright has on two separate occasions indicated that the door for a softening of the U.S. position on Afghanistan, to include recognition of the Taliban, is open. It would therefore be extremely difficult for the United States to withhold any concessions in the event that the Taliban should choose to alter its position on women and girls or agree to extradite bin Laden.

Critics of engagement will decry the previously discussed humanitarian concerns, most prominently the status of women and girls, and recommend disapproval of this option. Unfortunately, this is not only hypocritical, it will lead to continued U.S. sanctions against Afghanistan, ensure the continued failure of its economy, and perpetuate the present

drug culture, as both sides struggle to generate the funds required to fight. Whereas engagement creates opportunities to work within the Taliban and promote change, to include pushing for the advancement of U.S. interests.

In conclusion, it appears the U.S. may be answering the international call for leadership in resolving the Afghan crisis. The U.S., together with Turkey, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, took the first step towards implementing this study's first recommendation on 18 November 1999, by signing a U.S. sponsored accord supporting the construction of two east-west pipelines.¹⁷⁶ While the ultimate construction of the pipelines is a function of private capital, namely U.S. and European oil companies, according to U.S. Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson the accord "is a strategic agreement that advances America's national interest."¹⁷⁷

It will be interesting to see how the U.S. handles Pakistan and its military regime in the future, either choosing to maintain its sanctions or justify their removal. Considering that the U.S. and the international community's position on bin Laden is clear, it is important to determine the future direction of U.S.-Pakistan relations. If the United States can successfully implement recommendations one and two, perhaps then it can address the Afghan conflict directly and build a ship in a shatterproof bottle.

¹⁷⁶ Stephen Kinzer, "Caspian Lands Back a Pipeline Pushed by West," *The New York Times* (19 November 1999): 1.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

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